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SEXUAL MORALITY IN THE THIRD MILLENNIUM

**Edited by
Felix Podimattam**

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A JOURNAL OF CHRISTIAN INTERPRETATION

Sexual Morality in the Third Millennium

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Editorial

According to practically unanimous admission of present-day observers, one of the most notorious features of modern civilization is the deplorable level of its sex life. The sorry plight into which our generation has fallen has reached such an acute state that it may well be called a crisis. Chaos is the only term adequately describing the condition that prevails with regard to sex matters. In the sphere of sex the world of today has lost its sense of orientation; it is hopelessly perplexed and tragically bewildered. The entire sex morality of the past is being questioned and regarded with open distrust, if not with frank hostility.

Thus on the chaotic state of sex morality in our days we need not dwell, since it is patent to every one. It stands to reason that this condition of things is productive of much human unhappiness and social disintegration, for sex cuts deep into the human life, and human happiness and social well-being depend in a large measure on a rational solution of the sex problem. Wrong attitudes towards sex are ruinous in their practical consequences and play havoc with the finer values of life. Our generation is beginning to see that it is making a sad failure and a sorry farce of life.

There are those who fondly hope that out of this chaos a new order will emerge, and that the sex morals of the future will rise to a new high level on which humanity will achieve a greater happiness and attain to a fine degree of self-realization. These optimists are hugging an illusion to their heart, because our age is seeking the solution of the sex problem in the wrong direction. To liberate the sex life from all inhibitions, to surrender it completely to individual whim and fancy, to detach it from responsibility and to release it from social sanctions, does not make for human betterment and elevation, but, on the contrary, will accentuate the evils which are already so much in evidence. Naturalism cannot point the way out of the sex misery that weights so heavily on the men and women of our days and especially has descended like a blight on the young. A naturalistic age will be mastered and enslaved by sex because it unduly exalts and glorifies sex; and sex is a ruthless master. The

prevalent apotheosis of sex can eventuate only in the most shameful sex bondages. The drift in that direction is but too apparent. It is terrible irony that those who use sex for the ends of personal gratification become its helpless victims and abject slaves. When sex rules, Man does not reach his full stature but only achieves a stunted growth. Naturalism holds out no hope to us in the existing moral crisis.

Nobody can deny the high value of sex. Its power is all too evident. Its value when it is rightly directed is immense. The comradeship of men and women united in love, the blessing of parenthood, the many inspirations to excellent achievements which people get from sex attraction and from love of their children, are as precious as can be. But these finer fruits come from keeping the sex impulses under the control of ideals of order, faithfulness, and responsibility.

False sympathy has permitted others to build up a new sex ethics on human weakness. This does not even help those who have already gone wrong, for to tear down one restriction does not ensure the integrity of the next one. Indulgence goes on spreading when it is not checked. High ideals generate moral power and brace the individual against his own weaknesses. By lowering the ideal you rob humans of what little spiritual strength they have left. The ethics of weakness is the surest way to a complete disintegration of moral character. Confront an individual with a moral imperative, and something of moral force will stir within him; remove the moral imperative and the collapse of character will be absolute.

In view of the conditions set forth above, a new and well-reasoned exposition of Catholic sex morality is not out of place.

The crafting of a collection of articles on a common theme requires an enormous amount of perseverance, discipline, patience, and above all the support of those around you.

It is our hope that this volume will help to advance not only the discussion but the practice of a sexual morality that avoids the limitations of the extreme views on both sides of the spectrum.

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Felix Podimattam

Sexual Morality: A Reinterpretation

Felix Podimattam

'A Positive Christian Sexual Morality, especially for Single People' is what Dr. Felix Podimattam tries to delineate in this article. It is admitted that Sex is a gift of God. So it has its own purpose for every human being, married or single. Since two purposes of sexuality, namely, union and procreation belong to married people, Christians maintained that sexuality is confined to married life. But it has its divine dimensions other than these, says the author. According to him a distinction has to be made between generic sexuality and genital sexuality. Also between physical intimacy and genital intimacy. Sexuality has its relational, affective and social dimensions of love and sharing and fellowship. Love is the most potent factor in the world.

Can we construct a positive Christian sexual ethic for today, particularly for single people? Karen Lebacqz, professor of Christian Ethics at Pacific School of Religion, thinks so¹. He feels that a new ethic for single sexuality is needed, for the tradition that requires celibacy in singleness is not adequate. This situation does not mean that anything goes or that the Church has nothing to offer by way of positive ethic for single people.

Lebacqz begins with Christian tradition, which affirms that sex is a gift from God. Sex is to be used within the boundaries of God's purposes.

The two redeeming purposes of sexuality have always been understood as union and procreation. With these purposes in mind, Christians maintained that marriage was the only proper context for sexual expression.

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1. Karen Lebacqz, "Appropriate Vulnerability: A Sexual Ethic for Singles," in: David Clark and Robert Rakestraw, ed., *Readings in Christian Ethics*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1996), pp. 149-154

The tradition condemns all genital sexual expression outside marriage. Non-genital sexual expression is also suspect because it is thought to lead inexorably to genital sexual expression.

Standards within the Churches have recently loosened, says Lebacqz, but there has been no fundamental challenge to this basic paradigm. Today, some Catholics and most Protestants accept "preceremonial" sex between responsible and committed adults. For instance, Paul Ramsey argues that this is marriage in the moral sense². Both traditions have moved toward affirming union as primary, while still upholding the importance of procreation. Thus, there is some acceptance of non-marital sexual expression, provided it is in the context of deep interpersonal commitment.

According to Lebacqz, neither Catholic nor Protestant tradition provides a totally satisfactory explanation of why sexuality should be expressed only in marriage or in a "preceremonial" relationship that will consummate in marriage.

Lebacqz accepts part of the *method* that has led to the traditional interpretation, but wishes to offer an additional insight into the nature of sexuality that might provide a fuller appreciation of the ethical context in which sexuality is expressed. He agrees with the traditional understanding that sex is a gift from God to be used within the confines of God's purposes. However, Lebacqz would add to the traditional purposes of union and procreation another God-given purpose of sexuality that he believes would open up a different understanding of human sexuality and of a sex ethic. That God-given purpose concerns the religious purpose of sex (divine dimension) as implied in Genesis 1:27: "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them." I would suggest another addition, namely, broadening of the understanding of the procreative purpose of sex to include psychological and spiritual "procreation" besides physical procreation.

Man-woman love is always fruitful - even in the case of celibates. Love is not love that yields no fruit. The most creative force in the world is love. The world itself is a creation of divine love. In the likeness of God, man and woman were created to love the world together, and participate with God in its creation. Man and woman are meant to be

2. Paul Ramsey, "On Taking Sexual Responsibility Seriously Enough" in: Gobson Winter, ed., *Social Ethics* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1968), pp. 45ff.

friends receiving the gift of the earth from its Creator, and sharing together in its development.

Their original blessing, to increase and fill the earth is not only to fill the planet with many more people, but still more basically to fill the earth with love so that the "new creation" might be born out of the "groaning and travailing" of the old. The whole universe calls out to man and woman to increase and multiply their creative love because "creation still retains the hope of being freed, like us, from its slavery to decadence, to enjoy the same freedom and glory as the children of God" (Rom 8:21). This immense challenge to the fruitful love of man and woman comes to them from the poor and hungry, the ignorant and the oppressed, the unborn and the aged, the cities, slums, farms, churches and even from nature's wilderness that is being destroyed by the uncaring. When man and woman become friends, they are ready to cooperate in these many tasks. Each regards with esteem the special approach of the other. Each has a different sense-of-the-earth in its problems and mystery. Man is generally more inclined than woman to explore and to manufacture things. But the cold, aggressive force of his technology, in spite of its many benefits, is now in danger of destructive pollution and rape of the earth. Woman is needed to balance this sense of power over nature with a creative sense of reverence for our home in the universe. Woman is more inclined to encourage things to grow from within their own inner forces. Man is more ready to take things apart to see how they are made in order to learn how to make something else. Both inclinations are fruitful, but only when integrated with each other. Of course, man and woman do not have to marry in order to work together in the task of developing and caring for the world. But when they do marry, co-creation takes on the task of procreation also. In the broad and open setting of the co-creative sharing, conjugal love is fruitful, also, in a way that is unique to itself. The most special fruit of conjugal love is the child.

According to Lebacqz, nothing suggests that the only appropriate expression of divine dimension of sex is in marriage. Non-marital sexuality might express appropriate divine dimension of sex.

Lebacqz *seems* to be correct and I have no hesitation in proposing his opinion *as probable*. This approach is new and is offered as a hypothesis, the best theory that can be found to fit the facts of experience, and the findings of science and of theology.

Religious Purpose of Sex

The religious meaning of sexuality is most clearly expressed in Ephesians 5: 22-33, where the writer takes up the Old Testament symbol of Yahweh as the husband of the chosen people and building on Jesus' own reference to himself as the Bridegroom (Mk 2: 10-20) transforms this into a symbol of the love between Christ and his community. Thus human married love becomes an analogue through which we learn how God loves us and what our response to him through love of our neighbour should be.

We are yearning for closer, more fulfilling, more life-giving connectedness with others, with our world, and with ourselves. This means we are yearning for closer connectedness with God, the heart of the universe itself. When we yearn for life-giving relationships with any person or part of creation, we are at the very same time reaching for God. For, according to an incarnationalist faith, God is the spiritual presence who becomes incarnate in and through creaturely flesh.

Reflecting further on the religious dimension of sex, we can argue that our sexuality is something God-like in us. The distinction between man and woman is itself a manifestation of the image of God. Man's sexuality is part of what it means to be like the Creator. This is the meaning of the statement of Genesis 1:27 that "God created Man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them."

As Karl Barth observes³, God is not solitary. He is fellowship in himself. He is a community. He is triune God, God-in-relationship. This is as much implied in the definition of God by St. John that "God is love" (1 Jn 4:8,16), for love is nothing but interpersonal relationship.

The human too is being-in-relationship. Humanity is, in its deepest roots, a shared humanity. A humanity that is not shared humanity is inhumanity. And ultimately this mode of human being as shared humanity is what makes him/her like God.

But this is not all. The Bible does not say that God "created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; I and Thou he created them". Man is not just in any fellowship with his neighbour. According to the Bible, God created Man male and female (Gen 1:27). The primal form of humanity as fellowship, then, is that of man and woman. The Bible makes no direct comment on Man in the image of

3. Cf. Paul Jewett, *Man as Male and Female* (Grand Rapids, 1975), pp. 34-36.

God save to observe that he exists as male and female. Man and woman were created as sexually distinguished individuals but in their being together as individuals, they were like God.

Now it begins to be clear how our sexuality is a deep dimension of God-likeness. Our sexuality is human fellowship at its intimate peak. And God is fellowship par excellence. In God's own being there is a radical distinction; God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Hence God is in himself God who is in fellowship with himself. Likewise, in Man's being too there is a radical distinction: Man is male and female. He too is a being in fellowship. At our creaturely human level, the most elemental form of fellowship is that of male and female and we never experience the deepest fellowship in any other way than as between man and woman. Therefore, Man's existence in the fellowship of male and female is the mode of his existence as created in the image of God.

There is another way of looking at man and woman as the image of God. Looking into the life of God as revealed by him, we discover that two activities are supreme in him, namely, generation and communion. There is generation in God in as much as the First Person of the Blessed Trinity constitutes the origin of the Second Person who is with him and is of the same divine nature. Communion too is in God in its perfection. The Father infinitely and eternally loves the Son who reciprocates it likewise. This infinite and eternal love between the two infinite and eternal Persons cannot but be another infinite and eternal Person, the Holy Spirit.

Now communion and generation (at least in the psychological sense) are also the supreme activities of man and woman. It follows from this that human sexuality - man and woman - is the created reflection of the uncreated generation and communion that are found in God. In other words, sex is the created participation of the uncreated communion and generation that are going on in God. To be sure, there is no sexuality in God. Yet, what God achieves without sexuality, namely, eternal generation and eternal communion, human beings achieve in a created way only through their sexual differentiation as man and woman. Human being existing as male and female alone is capable of reflecting ideally at the creature level the infinite and eternal communion and generation in God. Man and woman together alone can achieve the ideal communion that is possible for human beings in this world. Again, man and woman together alone can exercise generativity in the fullest sense of the word, that is, psychologically as well as physically. There is no communion comparable

to man-woman communion. By the same token, there is no fruitfulness that is comparable to man-woman fruitfulness. In sum, the love and fruitfulness of the Blessed Trinity constitute the ultimate basis of human sexuality. From the perfect love and fruitfulness of the Triune God human sexuality derives and divides.

Turning to the transcendent dimension of man-woman love, we find that man-woman love is indeed a launching pad for a transcendental experience in which the divine is unveiled. Man-woman love is nothing short of a path leading to the experience of God. Simple reflection on the various aspects of heterosexual friendship reveals that it has a dimension which reaches out beyond the concerned lovers to include God.

Every hunger for true love is, in the final analysis, hunger for God. All have a thirst for loving and being loved without restrictions of time and space and without wear and tear. In every search for love, we are out for LOVE, namely, God. This is why, quest for love is at least an implicit quest for God.

Love of the friend encompasses love of God. God is at the basis of one's being. God is nearer to one than one is to oneself. God is the one "in whom we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:28). Accordingly, we can hardly think of a person in his or her totality without the Absolute being included in their horizon. This explains why loving the friend is loving God as well.

True love implies an unconditional surrender of one's self to the beloved; in such a love one makes an unlimited commitment of self to the other and accepts the other's reciprocal unlimited commitment. However, unlimited commitment can be made only to God and this fact introduces the Divine into loving.

In friendship the other remains a perpetual mystery. An unfathomable enigma is present even in the total and unreserved encounter of friends. Invariably, the beloved is a reserve of hidden depth that the lover can never explore fully. The final reality of the beloved always eludes the lover. Much remains untapped in the love encounter. Individual identity is so personal to a human being that it frustrates all attempts at unreserved communication. A vague sensation that something cannot be shared is a distressing component of friendship. A certain incommunicability keeps on holding lovers apart. In this mysterious experience theology discovers a divine element.

When friends experience love, a sense of inadequacy is certain to overwhelm them. Such love is so profound an experience that no personal effort could merit it. It is sensed as something gratuitous and beyond their deserts. This overwhelming perception of undeservedness is the divine investment in love.

The fortune of friendship is unable to provide an all-round fulfilment to the human heart. No love, however permanent or powerful, renders us more than finite. We may occasionally break through the boundaries of our finitude in moments of ecstasy. But these moments experienced in mystic contemplation or at the height of sharing in friendship are fleeting, and we find ourselves all too quickly alone again, cut off and isolated. This veiled discontent that is implicit in love is an urgent invitation to God, the very fountain of happiness. The despair experienced even in the ecstatic bliss of conjugal love is an unmistakable pointer to the unending and perfect bliss which God alone can offer.

As friends love each other, they become aware that love requires a setting in which to love the other. They can love truly only if they love in a milieu which is superior to them, in a unity that is more lofty and more full, in a plenary term which assures the union of the partners in friendship. Just as breathing presupposes an atmosphere, so love presupposes an erosphere.

Love is a triangular reality, God completing the circuit. In love two distinct and complete persons form a meta-self, a meta-person, a unique third self. The two love energies proceeding from the personal core of lovers combine to give the experience of a third Self, God. This is why authentic love never fails to exude divine fragrance.

That there is a divine dimension to the experience of falling in love is obvious enough. Suddenly the world is transformed. Not only the times together but all of everyday is illumined by a strange new radiance. Everything has a greater significance. There is a feeling of having entered into a new life bigger and more real than anything that had gone before. Other people, even the ones the lovers didn't like before, seem different, and they begin to "feel" for them easily, as if breaking through to one person had also somehow brought them into more intimate contact with all people. They seem to have discovered a common "spirit" through the self-discovery which occurs in the discovery of the other. Here theology helps us to understand what is taking place. God is love and to fall in love is to fall in God.

Every peak experience or ecstasy contains an element of the divine. Ecstasy is that which is particularly striking and significant and thereby

involving some form of going-beyond-oneself, of standing-out-above-contingency. It is an experience in which some otherwise distant reality is glimpsed as one with self here and now. It is the experience of the temporary dissolution of boundaries, and cannot easily be forgotten because it is so unusual or different.

Undoubtedly, the experience of heterosexual love is one of the most profound peak experiences of humans. And to that extent, it provides a distinctive sense of transcendence in as much as every one of our joys is, in effect, bits and pieces of the one joy we all seek consciously or unconsciously, the joy of God's company - Beatific Vision.

The suggestion that sexuality and mysticism are interrelated psychologically and spiritually makes a great deal of sense. For the religious person both sexual love and contemplation are channels of union with God and/or with another person which involve the dissolution of the boundaries that normally identify us as individuals, distinct from other people and from all that surrounds us. A true human intimacy is a mirror of God's relationship with us⁴.

If a man can see a woman as a spiritually consecrated soul-body reality and love her as such, then he is in the right way of loving God with all his heart: he is loving him in the form which is most adequate (or appropriate) to the present state of his vision. There may be higher states of vision. It may be possible ultimately to love God free from all form. But it is certainly better for the human to love God in a form to which he/she can respond, and which has meaning for him/her, than it is to imagine he/she is loving a formless God when really he/she is simply committed to a spiritual vacuum. It is not for nothing that the great Andalusian spiritual master, Ibn Arabi, could say that the sages who enjoy the most perfect vision of God are those who can contemplate him in a woman.

If so, authentic sexual love for a person is for the "glory of God" in that person rather than for selfish gratification. It would seem that the only sexual love between individuals, even when they are man and wife, which is not an abuse, is a love of this kind. It is the only sexual love in which the body is seen not simply as a means for self-satisfaction or as an end in itself, but as the outer form or garment of the divine image in the human. It is the only sexual love in which the physical union of man and woman is in recognition of the prior conjunction of their two inner

4. Philip Sheldrake, "Befriending Our Desires", *The Way*, 35 (1995), pp. 92-99.

selves, so that each offers himself or herself to the sacred being of the other, to the God in the other. In this love the man and the woman become one flesh, not to feed their individual egoism, but to participate in the transparent metaphysical reality of each other's being.

In this context, a significant point emerges from a study of the Bible in relation to the pleasure of everyday life. In a general way, eating, drinking and sexuality are implicitly part of the structures of creation. Food and drink are fundamental to creation and an essential aspect of God's creativity and the giftedness of the world (Ps 145:15-16). Even wine is regarded as a gift of God and part of the natural celebration of life which God's creation calls forth (Ps 104:14-15; Eccl 10:19). In this sense both eating and drinking are linked with hospitality. They signify far more than the satiating of bodily needs. They stand for the bonds of family and friendship. In the same way sexuality is linked not just to procreation and the responsibilities of marriage but also to the joys of intimacy, bodily passion and self-transcendence as we have been thus far explaining. Although God transcends the boundaries of gender, nevertheless sexual differentiation, as we saw, is an important indication of human likeness to the divine (Gen 1:26-27). Like its divine counterpart, human life is creative and relational. In this view, healthy sexual pleasure is revelatory of the divine image. It reflects the divine energy for life, community and intimacy around which human life is created and sustained. In this sense, wholesome sexual pleasure is implicitly God-bearing and God-revealing.

All told, man-woman love and healthy sexual pleasure is a saga of transcendence. There is subtler meaning to sexual love and wholesome sexual pleasure than what meets the eye, a meaning that is essentially religious.

Chastity of Single People

As observed earlier quoting Karen Lebacqz, nothing suggests that the appropriate expression of the divine dimension of sex is only in marriage. Non-marital sexuality might express the appropriate divine dimension of sex and the broader procreative dimension of sex.

Very often we in the Church place single persons in a real bind regarding their sexuality. We hang them on the horns of a genuine dilemma: either marry, or bury your sexuality. But the dilemma is false, and there is another option. It is possible to affirm and celebrate one's sexuality and still reserve the highest aspects of it for the covenant of marriage. Singles

have the freedom in Christ to bring to the fore and develop sexuality's many aspects of intimacy and fellowship. How does a single Christian live his sexual dimension in a responsible and fulfilling way?

Different Grades of Sexual Actuation

At the outset a distinction is to be made between generic sexuality and genital sexuality. Most people in our culture are inclined to equate the term "sexuality" with what is more properly called "genitality." Sexuality has to do with the sexes, with our attractions for other people, with our relational rootedness. In this complexity of sexual realities lies the genital dimension, which is primarily biological or physiological. Sexuality has affective and social dimensions as well. Not all that is sexual is genital. This latter term is better reserved to designate whatever pertains to the arousal or use of the anatomical parts of the body we call the genitals, whether we are referring to erotic feelings, physiological changes such as erections, or the actions related to sexual foreplay and sexual intercourse.

Freud himself introduced the distinction between genital sexuality and generic sexuality. He emphasized a sexual history prior to the emergence of the genital potentialities that accompany puberty. He wrote: "Whereas other people declare that 'sexual' and 'connected with reproduction' (or, if you prefer to put it more shortly, 'genital') are identical, we cannot avoid postulating something 'sexual' that is not 'genital' - has nothing to do with reproduction"⁵.

Both human generic sexuality and genital sexuality arise from one's sexuality and thus form two dimensions of one sexual life. They can never be completely separated. Generic sexuality and genital sexuality are distinguishable but not separable, different and yet related⁶.

Another distinction is to be made between physical intimacy and genital intimacy. The human's striving after intimacy is not the same as his/her striving after genital satisfaction and the two should not be confused.

Parental love and infantile love are not genital love, nor need the love between two men, two women, or even between a particular man and

5. Sigmund Freud, "The Development of the Libido and the Sexual Organizations". *The Complete Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis* (New York, 1966), p. 312. Also see Freud's *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (New York, 1971), pp. 98-99 and 107-108.
6. Donald Georgan, *The Sexual Celibate* (New York: Seabury, 1974), pp. 51-58.

a particular woman be genital. Love is love - an emotional bond of attachment - and whether genital feelings enter into it or not is a secondary matter. Tenderness and affective relationships do not necessarily spring from genital desire but from the instinctual need for companionship and intimacy.

Referring to genital sexuality, we need to make a distinction between total genital sexuality and partial genital sexuality. Total genital sexuality refers to sexual intercourse while partial genital sexuality refers to acts other than sexual intercourse.

No Total Genital Sexuality in Single Life

In Catholic theology, all Christians are called to chastity according to their state in life. Three states of life and three kinds of chastity are recognized: married chastity, single chastity, and consecrated chastity. What is permitted in single chastity (for example, dating) would be inappropriate for consecrated chastity; some behaviours appropriate for married chastity (genital intercourse) would be inappropriate for single chastity.

Catholic doctrine views genital intercourse as morally permissible only in the heterosexual married state. This has a solid philosophical and theological basis. According to the biblical authors, sexual intercourse creates a mysterious, unique "one flesh" bond. In the creation narrative we are told in simple, yet profound words, "Therefore man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife and they become one flesh" (Gen 2:24). When the Pharisees sought to embroil Jesus in the contemporary controversy over the grounds of divorce, he appealed to the "one flesh" concept of Genesis and added, "So they are no longer two but one. What therefore God has joined together, let no man put asunder" (Mt 19:6). In Ephesians, Paul quotes the "one flesh" account to urge husbands to love their wives, because "he who loves his wife loves himself" (Eph 5:28). His point is a simple one: Marriage creates such an intimate union that to do violence to one's spouse is to do violence to oneself.

However, the most graphic passage of all is found in Paul's teaching in 1 Corinthians 6:16: "Do you not know that he who joins himself to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For, as it is written, 'The two shall become one flesh.'" This passage makes it unmistakably clear that Paul sees sexual intercourse as the act par excellence that produces a "one flesh" bond.

We see now why biblical morality reserves sexual intercourse for the covenant of marriage. Sexual intercourse involves something far more than just the physical, more than even the emotions and psyche. It touches deep into the spirit of each person and produces a profound union that the biblical writers call "one flesh". Remember, we do not *have* a body, we *are* a body; we do not *have* a spirit, we *are* a spirit. What touches the body deeply touches the spirit as well.

Sexual intercourse is a "life-uniting act". It is an act of the whole self which affects the whole self; it is a personal encounter between man and woman in which each does something to the other for good or for ill, which can never be obliterated. This remains true even when they are ignorant of the radical character of the act.

Thus the reasoning behind the biblical prohibition of sexual intercourse for the unmarried goes beyond the common practical concerns of pregnancy or venereal disease or whatever. Sexual intercourse outside of marriage is wrong because it violates the inner reality of the act; it is wrong because unmarried people thereby engage in a life-uniting act without a life-uniting intent. Intercourse signs and seals - and maybe even delivers - a life-union, and life-union means marriage.

Therefore, Paul is saying no to sexual intercourse outside of marriage because it does violence to the very nature of the act itself. The act draws us into the profound mystery of a "one flesh" reality.

The Hebrew word for intercourse means "to know". The biblical writers understood that in sexual intercourse a special kind of knowledge was conveyed, a special kind of intimacy came into being. This reality they called "one flesh". This, then, is why the Bible reserves sexual intercourse for the covenant of marriage.

In fact, what we call sexual needs are not real needs at all but wants. The body needs food, air and water - without these human life cannot long survive. But no one has yet died for lack of sexual intercourse. Many have lived quite full and satisfying lives without genital intercourse.

So sexual intercourse is a human want, not a human need, and the difference is significant. Psychologists make a distinction here between a feeling of frustration and a feeling of deprivation. The latter feeling does not harm anyone because there is seen to be a reason for it, and because one's feeling of self-esteem is not threatened by the deprivation. The girl who refrains from sexual intercourse for the present, as a means of preparing for something better in the future, is deprived of physical sex outlet, but not frustrated - she has not lost self-esteem, but

strengthened it. Another girl lacking a "sex life", feels that this is merely because no man finds her attractive; she is a discard; a failure; and in such a case she naturally feels frustrated. Her self-esteem, has been damaged, and she may go into various adventures in order to reassure herself that she is really not so lacking in "sex appeal" as she actually fears that she is. Most of the premature sexual experience among young people has little relation to sex, strictly speaking; it is based on curiosity, vanity, and desire for attention.

Not only there need be no fear of the word "suppression", but actually suppression is indispensable in all civilizations. It is only as our biological drives are held in control that we can live together. Everyone, for instance, has occasional aggressive impulses. If it is dangerous to suppress them, why not go ahead and murder the boss when you feel like it?

If we insist on being "natural", surely we must logically go all the way; not merely pick out one impulse with which to be "natural", while agreeing that all the other equally powerful and useful instincts must be kept in line for the good of all concerned, even though it is "unnatural"!

To understand the above-described difference between human want and human need can be tremendously liberating for singles. They are not half-people, unfulfilled and incomplete. They do not need sexual intercourse to experience wholeness in their sexuality.

The apostle Paul dealt specifically with this matter of "sexual needs" in his letter to the Corinthians. They lived in a sexually charged environment, and some, sensing the liberty that is in the Gospel, assumed that this meant total sexual freedom, including sexual relations with prostitutes. Evidently, their slogan was "All things are lawful in Christ". Paul responded, "All things are lawful for me," but not all things are helpful (1 Cor 6:12).

The Corinthians then raised the issue of sex as a normal physical need just like food. In other words, if sex is a natural physical appetite like appetite for food, what is wrong with satisfying our sexual need whenever the urge arises? Paul's answer was that "food is meant for the stomach" but "the body is meant for the Lord" (1 Cor 6:13). He went on to argue that the digestive system is temporal and biological and has meaning only in earthly existence. But the body is the temple of the Holy Spirit and is destined for resurrection and filled with eternal significance. Therefore we should "shun immorality". Promiscuous sex is such a travesty of the "one flesh" principle that it violates the spiritual

aspect of our bodies (1 Cor 6:16-17). Paul's word to us then is that sexual intercourse is so filled with eternal significance that it should always be reserved for the permanent commitment of marriage.

Hence we cannot approve of the so-called "sexual love affairs" between single persons. It is certainly true that the psychological climate as regards such relationships has undergone a revolution during the present century. In these days, not only are such affairs quite common in the lives of people of professional or similar status but men and women who have never had any such experience may even tend to feel ashamed and inferior because of the lack, and would like to be thought more "experienced" than they are.

Most often these physical and emotional relationships outside marriage bring with them problems of a kind which may be deeply upsetting to emotional balance. Almost always there must be an ultimate frustration to a normal woman, in the impracticality of embarking on pregnancy and children.

Thus, the fact remains that an affair will almost inevitably bring with it problems and anxieties. Though not universally condemned and therefore not necessarily kept secret as such, as the affair would have been in the good old days, full social support and the security of marriage will be lacking. And lack of what should normally be part of the experience is almost bound to lead to discontent, conflict and unhappiness, which gradually combine to prepare the way for a dissolution of the relationship. For one thing, most professionals in responsible work have their reputations to consider, even in these days. It is, from an economic point of view usually essential for them to consider it, quite apart from any social or conventional point of view. This alone tends to make the association an uneasy one.

Again one can never have a solid sense of security in the relationship with a man or woman who, in spite of even the most genuine love, has probably primary obligations elsewhere. Secrecy and deceit on both these counts are therefore involved, even when the relationship is recognized with sympathy within a circle of friends. The great lack in all non-marital affairs must always be that there can be no established home. And a woman must always long to bear children to the man she loves, in fulfillment of her total sexual experience. Far from fulfilling this normal total experience, the chances are that the fear of pregnancy (inwardly so desired) is likely to be a constant underlying source of anxiety, even though in these days methods of birth control have reached

a high degree of efficiency. In the absence of advice and teaching in contraceptive methods which the woman in the situation under consideration may be unwilling to seek, deviations from normal sexual intercourse may be resorted to, which belittle the relationship, or cause nervous strain. Moreover, all the satisfactions of a day-in, day-out living together - real companionship in responsibilities as well as in pleasures, are almost always precluded, and this fact alone marks off the affair as something on quite a different level from marriage. Holidays together are no substitute, nor the fullest satisfaction in actual sexual relations. In marriage the latter is an essential factor in the evolution of a perfect and enduring marriage relationship. In the affair sexual delights may have to carry more than their share of significance, in a way which does not make for stability, because of the sense of something still lacking - something better and more enduring than simply physical satisfaction, even though this be the expression of genuine love.

All these things, outward and inward, tend to the saddening and shortening of the affair, and even in these days the external characteristics of a non-marital relationship that have been enumerated seem to be, in most cases, as inevitable as is usually the deeper emotional unsettling which we have described.

In what has been said so far on this subject, it has been assumed that the challenge to, and the foundation of, the love affair has been genuine, mutual love. But unmarried persons, lonely and aware of their deprivations, and often with a sense of inferiority about their sexual inexperience, may be tempted to enter upon affairs with persons, if opportunity offers, without this pull of real love, just for the sake of the experience, and because of the boost to their self-confidence which a casual invitation or response may give. Such affairs entered on without real love are bound to be transitory, and the temporary excitement and reassurance are unlikely to meet the deep emotional needs of the persons concerned, even though some complete sexual satisfaction may be achieved in intercourse⁷.

Where does this leave those who have engaged in intercourse outside of marriage but who now recognize that what they have done is really and truly wrong? Is the bonded reality of intercourse utterly irreversible? No, it is not irreversible, but it does demand the healing touch of God. To engage in a life-uniting act without a life-uniting intent wounds the inner spirit. Such wounds often fester and become infected so that they

7. Laura Hutton, *The Single Woman*, pp. 63-70.

poison the entire spiritual life. At least, they leave ugly scars. But the wonderful news is that healing is possible. The grace of God can flow into the wounded spirit, healing and restoring.

Why marriage is necessary for the full activation of sex? It is argued that if the couple are in love with each other, a ceremony in church or a piece of paper in the registry office will not alter their feelings to each other.

There are historical reasons in favour of a public church ceremony. In the Middle Ages it was possible to be validly married in the eyes of the Church privately if a couple promised to take each other as husband and wife and live together as such. These unions were the equivalent of the living together of today and were called clandestine marriages carried out in private. The trouble was that these private vows could be and were repudiated. Women found themselves married and abandoned and men committed themselves privately to more than one woman. The need for a public witness became vital.

But these historical reasons are not the only ones. A marriage is both a private commitment and a public event. Society is involved when a couple marry. The couple are no longer free to be courted by anyone else. They gather rights to themselves as married people; they own property and they become the parents of children. In all these areas society is involved in being a public witness to the marriage and also in supporting it in various ways. Furthermore, Christianity lays great stress on a permanent and exclusive commitment as being proper to marriage. It is only in the presence of a permanent commitment that the couple have the freedom to look at their disappointments, conflicts, differences of opinion without the fear of losing their partners. The vows taken publicly have the strength of reminding the couple when they are at their lowest that they are committed to each other and somehow they have to find an answer to their worst troubles. For many people the commitment of permanency which Christianity requires for marriage appears to suggest that Christianity condemns the married to a sentence of life imprisonment. It is in fact nothing of the sort. It is exactly the other way round. Christianity demands a permanent commitment which is both private and public because this is the strongest human guarantee that we possess which can safeguard the vicissitudes of a human relationship as complicated as marriage.

But we should refrain from dubbing it as "concubinage" if they are living together in a committed and exclusive relationship, faithful to one

another. In this case they have a lot of the appropriate attributes of marriage present. To that extent we should recognize that the missing elements are important but limited.

In this, as in all situations where the moral law is contravened, we have to be Christ-like and be clear about sin whilst immensely compassionate towards the sinner. In other words, we have to retain an attitude of brotherly love towards such couples so that they can be kept within the confines of the Christian community and not alienated from it. In due course they will wish to get married publicly and when this happens, one hopes that they choose a Christian ceremony. Furthermore, when their children are born it is also hoped that they will have them baptized and brought up as Christians.

Living together is an aberrant form of marriage. For some couples it is a serious time of preparation for marriage, which when it comes is successful. For others it is an escape from serious commitment rationalized in a variety of ways.

Richard McCormick, S.J. also speaks directly to this question: "The question that must be put to our generation is this: In what circumstances should the sexual experience of intimacy occur if sexual language is to retain its viability as truly human language...? The answer given by Christians to the question ... is simply this: sexual expression is the language of relationship. It gets its fully human meaning from the relationship it expresses and fosters. And the relationship which provides us with our best opportunity to integrate and humanize our sexuality is the covenant relationship of marriage; for it is friendship that generates constancy, loyalty, fidelity. And these are the qualities that allow sex to speak a truly human language."⁸ As such, the whole truth of sexuality is made possible only in public marriage.

What about Partial Genital Sexuality in Single Life

Some singles live contentedly without engaging in any obvious outward sexual activity, but the majority form sexual partnership with other people with varying degrees of success. A single's chance of finding personal happiness and fulfillment is enhanced if she or he can enjoy being sexually aroused and achieving orgasm without guilt. This delight in sexual pleasure is intimately bound up with single's understanding of his/her identity, sexuality and personal destiny.

8. As quoted in: Daniel Lowery, *Following Christ* (Liguori, Missouri: Liguori Publications, 1982), p. 127.

When it comes to moral instructions to single people on issues of sexuality, consecrated celibates - consciously or unconsciously - often bring their own sexual agenda to bear. As a result of their own denials, struggles or frustrations with sexuality, consecrated celibates often speak out of a celibate bias that holds other unmarried people to the same standards of chastity that they as celibates have adopted for themselves.

It is, however, incorrect to regard singleness as equivalent to a call to celibacy. In fact, celibacy as lived by single persons, whether in a permanent or interim way, is not the same thing as vowed celibacy. It is not likely to be vowed at all, and because it does not have the same religious rationale surrounding it, it is not experienced or understood in the same way as is celibacy in religious life or priesthood.

So we need to have a different psychology, theology and ethics for single sexuality. It is asked whether partial genital acts such as heterosexual petting can ever be considered permissible for single persons.

Morally speaking, there are different categories of petting. There is, first of all, what is called exploitative petting clearly involving selfishness, manipulation, and abuse of the dignity of the other person. We know of people who move from woman to woman with no real commitment to anything but their own self-gratification. A second kind of petting is associated with a growing and maturing process which may ultimately lead a person to a firmer and truer commitment to chastity. Often the individual concerned has a history of not being able to relate to people in a loving and open way, perhaps as a result of early childhood experience of not being loved. Feeling a frantic need to reach out to people, he is unable to discriminate between authentic and inauthentic ways of doing so with the result that petting and other ways become part of the reaching out process. A third kind of petting refers to what may be called "responsible" petting and is resorted to as an expression of committed love and concern for the other. This type of petting which is neither the expression of married love nor an act of selfish promiscuity, is the point at issue in the present discussion.

When there is genuine regard and concern for the other person, and especially when the petting does express a stable, faithful loving relationship, petting *seems* to be permissible for single heterosexual friends. This is proposed as a *probable opinion* for the reasons to follow.

Non-Marital Sexual Pleasure Need not Necessarily be Lust

Sexual pleasure outside marriage need not *necessarily* be lust. Christians have identified sexual pleasure, particularly non-marital sexual

pleasure, with lust. According to Evelyn Whitehead and James Whitehead⁹, the chief architect of this pessimistic view of human sexuality was Saint Augustine. As sexual pleasure and lust became confused in Augustine's life, all physical affection seemed to be lustful craving. Whenever Augustine considers sexual pleasure he speaks about *taking* pleasure. Missing from his many discussion is any mention of *giving* pleasure to one's partner. Nor does he refer to *receiving* pleasure, allowing oneself to accept the gift of bodily delight. The life of this man seems not to have included these privileged experiences. For Augustine, sexual excitement would always be felt as punishment - a reminder of his selfishness and a bitter fruit of original sin. He did not know sexual arousal and pleasure as a gift exchanged between lovers.

But other Christians do know, affirm Whiteheads. Many couples today understand the receiving of sexual delight as a gift. They experience pleasure as something shared rather than as something taken for oneself. They know the special joy that comes in pleasing their partner. They learn the discipline of becoming attuned to the rhythm of another's arousal. And they find that careful attention to such shared pleasure enhances their life, rescues each of them from isolation, and makes all they do together richer and more fruitful.

Pleasure delights and refreshes our life. Whiteheads refer to the valuable distinction between two important kinds of pleasure made by C.S. Lewis in his *The Four Loves*: need-pleasures and pleasures of appreciation. Pleasures of need, Lewis suggests, are more urgent and instinctive. They impel us to a quick satisfaction. An example would be the thirst that we feel after working several hours in a hot sun. Suddenly we experience a sharp desire for water. We go inside and drink a large glass of cold water. As we quench this thirst, we feel a deep satisfaction. This experience of pleasure focuses on a very specific biological need. As we drink this glass of water, our need is quickly extinguished. Both the need and the pleasure are quickly over. This rapid satisfaction causes us to speak of this kind of pleasure in the past tense - "That was really good".

In Lewis' analysis, such need-pleasures are complemented by pleasures of appreciation. These arousals, while less urgent and instinctual, point to another aspect of pleasure in human life. An example is the peculiar pleasure we feel when we come upon a field of flowers.

9. Evelyn Whitehead and James Whitehead, *A Sense of Sexuality* (New York: Doubleday, 1989), pp. 93-107.

Their colour, their movement in the breeze arouse our delight. As we gaze at them, another kind of thirst stirs us. But this time we are not so quickly sated. No sharp biological need is relieved. We linger over our pleasure, savoring rather than quenching it. This pleasure is not as abruptly concluded as a quick drink of water. We tend to describe this kind of pleasure in the present tense: "How good it is to be here".

The mood accompanying the pleasure of appreciation is not relief. It is more gratitude than gratification. Feeling pleasure, we are often taken out of ourselves. We have been depressed or sad, but in the presence of pleasure we let this self-absorption go. Then a very different mood settle over us.

In sexual attraction we experience a pleasure that links need with appreciation. To neglect this complexity in our sexuality imperils our pleasure. Sometimes we are tempted to focus it as an instinct that wants to be satisfied, an itch to be scratched. As with the drink of water, this genital need is quickly satisfied. Both the need and the pleasure quickly pass. We are left gratified rather than grateful.

When we isolate the need-pleasure aspect of our sexuality, we focus on taking pleasure rather than sharing it. Neglecting the mutuality of sexual partners, this attitude focuses on pleasure as my need, a need to be quickly gratified. Such an intensely selfish view of sexual pleasure is, indeed, the meaning of concupiscence.

But we know, observe Whiteheads, that sexual attraction combines the pleasure of need with the pleasure of appreciation. The sex drive is a profound biological reality, the basis of our survival as a species. But the pleasure of this intense need is joined, in our experience, to the pleasure of appreciation. A special delight stirs us when we meet someone who is attractive to us. This person can absorb our attention. But we do not desire to consume this erotic delight, but to make it last. We feel pleasure akin to wonder. This is not just someone with whom to have sex. The erotic pleasure of appreciation we experience makes us eager to explore, to touch, every part of this person - body, ideas, hopes.

As our appreciation grows, Whiteheads continue, we feel the desire to give pleasure. We find that pleasuring the person - in body and in spirit - gives us great joy. Gradually we come to learn about the discipline of sexual delight. More than a biological need, it leads us into the complex world of partnership. We discover, sometimes painfully, the different rhythms and moods of sexual response between us. When we honour these differences, we find our shared pleasure deepening our life together.

We also learn not just to give pleasure, but to allow ourselves to receive pleasure. We can announce our needs instead of making the other person guess. We are able to surrender to the pleasure - giving in to the initiative of our partner.

The appreciation of sexual pleasure invites us to linger in one another's presence. We dream not just of satisfying needs, but of sharing a life. This complex delight emboldens us to risk the commitment of marriage.

Sexual excitement combines the pleasures of biological need and personal appreciation. When need and appreciation commingle in an energy that is both fierce and respectful, sexual pleasure finds its full potential. The perversion of sexual delight occurs when these two pleasures are divorced.

In brief, there exists a positive link between pleasure and commitment. Religious writers have often portrayed these two aspects of sexual lives as antagonists. A virtuous life seemed to demand an either/or choice: either we selfishly pursue pleasure or we settle down to a responsible, if arid, adult life. Commitment and duty appeared incompatible with pleasure and delight.

In such a stand-off, both sides suffered. We came to understand commitment as drab and unexciting; we understood pleasurable touches as only *taking* pleasure, not sharing or giving delight. To such a selfish act we gave the sinister name *concupiscence*.

Christians today, conclude Whiteheads, give witness to this wisdom: in affectionate touches, the concerned parties learn both to give and receive pleasure. The erotic life is about much more than "taking" pleasure - in its rapacious and selfish meanings. Physical love expressions invite us into a rhythm of pleasuring and being pleased - as does any lasting experience of mutuality. This combination of activity and passivity, of control and letting go, requires a genuine discipline.

Sensuality versus Seductiveness

Sensuality is to be distinguished from seductiveness. Many people go on the assumption that being sensual is being seductive, and being seductive is being sensual. Not so. They are different, and recognizing the difference may help us to be freer in expressing ourselves.

Being seductive is being out to seduce, entice, beguile. Seductiveness is done with serious intent either to get somebody into bed or to prove to oneself that somebody could be gotten into bed. There is always an element of slyness, of control, and manipulation, involved.

Sensuality is something else. When you are being sensual you make no demands, don't operate on the basis of art and artifice, aren't being manipulative. What you communicate exist for its own sake; either by what you say or how you say it, you make clear that you are putting on no pressure. You make clear the other person is not on the spot, you expect nothing in return for what you say.

Once a man was dining in a restaurant when an uncommonly pretty girl walked in and sat down nearby. The man looked at her with pleasure. She couldn't help noticing. As he left the restaurant he paused by the girl's table and said, "You are beautiful, I want to thank you for letting me look at you." They smiled at each other; he left; that was that.

Both the girl and the man had been sensual rather than seductive: she because she really didn't do anything deliberate or calculating to attract his attention; he because he candidly told her how she had stirred him - but without making her feel imposed upon or pressured to deal with the situation in any way.

When you are being seductive you are always in danger of generating anger or resentment because people don't really like to be imposed upon. When you are being sensual, by contrast, you are simply saying, "this is how I feel," which makes no demands and therefore implies spontaneity and freedom¹⁰.

Meaning of the Sixth Commandment

The people who heard this commandment intoned at Israel's annual festivals understood it, in its narrowest sense, as a warning to Israel's males to keep away from their neighbours' wives¹¹. A concern of this commandment, just as with all the others, is our neighbour's right - in this case a husband's right to the integrity of his marriage and certitude about his descendants. A man, married or not, committed adultery against a woman's husband when he slept with her. But a married man did not commit adultery against his own wife by having intercourse with another woman. A male broke the covenant of another man; he did not break his own covenant with his own wife.

A husband could sleep with a prostitute, and nobody much cared. No judge's finger was pointed at Samson for his sallies into the boudoirs

10. Myron Brenton, *Sex Talk* (N.Y: Stein and Day Publishers, 1972), pp. 79-80.

11. Lewis Smedes, "Respect for Covenant", in: Wayne Boulton, Thomas Kennedy and Allen Verhey, eds., *From Christ to the World* (Grand Rapids: William Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1994), pp. 347-349.

of liberated Philistines (Judg 16); nobody observed that Judah was a married man when he slept with his daughter-in-law Tamar under the impression that she was a prostitute (Gen 38:12ff). When Nathan condemned David for his disastrous affair with Bathsheba, the prophet did not say a word on behalf of David's own wives (2 Sam 11:12). In short, adultery was almost always an injustice only to the aggrieved husband, whose human right to descendants unquestionably his own was being abridged by his wife's dalliance with a stranger.

Adultery was not a private peccadillo, therefore, but a social crime that called retribution.

Adultery takes on a radically new look in the New Testament. The wife comes into her own as a full partner in the covenant; it is she who is sinned against when her husband violates his commitment to her. Jesus, for example, speaks of divorce as adultery, as a breach of the covenant. For Jesus, two whole and equal persons made a marriage; those two are the primary persons hurt in a violation of the marriage partnership. Paul supported the New Testament's "equal rights amendment" to the Old Testament regulations when he insisted that a man owed sexual allegiance to his wife as much as his wife owed it to him (1 Cor 7:4).

Violation of marriage is basically what the Sixth Commandment forbids. Adultery, as illicit sex, is prohibited as a most likely and most threatening assault on the partnership. But is this commandment also perhaps a kind of catch-all put-down of pleasure?

The Catholic and the Protestant traditions have tended to spread the net of this commandment over nearly every improper sexual impulse. Old-time sermons on the commandment zeroed in on "whatever may entice": short skirts, bobbed hair, the cinema, ballroom, dancing, and lipstick - all came in for attack. No one escaped the finger of the Sixth Commandment, for everyone has reason to cringe at some "lustful intemperance" in his own life.

It is a mistake to use the Sixth Commandment as a club against sexual passions. What happens when we do is that Eros seems totally defiled and passion an ugly product of sin. The real issue is obscured. We do the commandment more justice if we focus its clear light on one's duty to his or her marriage.

Essence of Chastity

In the recent past, most moral treatises on human sexuality opened

with a definition of chastity as the virtue that renounces all genital pleasure outside of marriage and regulates such pleasure in marriage. This sort of an understanding of chastity makes a virtue of denial, repression, and submersion of all human sexuality outside the context of marriage and procreation. This approach is reasonable if the purpose of human sexuality is seen as primarily procreative. Vatican II, however, has officially and explicitly rejected such a view as incomplete, and with good reason. It cannot serve as an adequate basis for a theology of human sexuality. The 1975 Vatican *Declaration on Sexual Ethics* accentuates the positive role of chastity: "The virtue of chastity, however, is in no way confined solely to avoiding the faults already listed. It is aimed at attaining higher and more positive goals. It is a virtue which concerns the whole personality, as regards both interior and outward behaviour" (no. 11). The US bishops define chastity as a way of "guiding the sexual instinct to the service of love and of integrating it in the development of the person.... Chastity truly consists in the long-term integration of one's thoughts, feelings, and actions in a way that values, esteems, and respects the dignity of oneself and others. Chastity frees us from the tendency to act in a manipulative or exploitative manner in our relationships and enables us to show true love and kindness always."¹²

To give expression to the fuller understanding of human sexuality the US bishops have defined the virtue of chastity in broader and more positive terms. Chastity may, therefore, be defined as the virtue which enables a person to transform the power of his or her sexuality into a creative and integrative force in his or her life. It facilitates the fullest realization of one's being as male or female and encourages the integration of self with others in the human community.

Chastity ultimately consists in humanizing sexuality which means giving it a goal beyond self and beyond the satisfaction of instinct. To the extent that a person orders his sexuality to selfless interpersonal relationships with full responsibility for the other, for the society and for the future, to that extent sexuality is humanized and is administered chastely.

Opinion of the Churches

The familiar Catholic way of thinking about "states of life" was implicitly aware of some of the more obvious links between spirituality

12. United States Catholic Conference, *Human Sexuality: A Catholic Perspective for Education and Lifelong Learning* (Washington, DC), p. 19.

and sexuality when it acknowledged marriage as a vocation and even a sacramental means of grace. But it rarely explored the ways in which, through marriage, the partners were brought closer to each other and to God, nor did it consider the ways in which the specifically sexual dimensions of marriage contributed to its growth in grace. Although the traditional theology instinctively sensed that spirituality and sexuality were related, it could not really explicate this relationship or develop it in a manner applicable to all Christians. It especially was unable to account for the single way of life.

The Episcopal Church's Working Paper asks: "Does the Church have an opportunity and responsibility to illustrate genuine relationships of love - responsible, caring relationships that help meet the needs of both single and married persons?" The United Presbyterian Study questions: "Is abstinence or sublimation the only advice the Church will have to give to single persons? Or will it be able to explore new forms of male-female relationships and, while accepting the primacy of marriage and the family as the pattern for heterosexual relationship, be able to condone a plurality of patterns which will make a better place for the unmarried?"¹³

Data of Scripture

While celibacy is a venerable Christian tradition and may even, as Paul suggested, be called for under certain circumstances, it is also a *charisma* (gift) and can never be demanded of those to whom such a gift has not been given. Paul indicated that the presence of this gift is known by the ability of the single person to deal with ungratified sexual desires without being dominated by them. For those without this gift, Paul considered the satisfaction of their desires entirely appropriate, so long as it was within the boundaries of ethics.

The Song of Songs seems to celebrate the goodness of non-marital sexual pleasure. This poem is special because it does not stress offspring as the goal and necessary fruit of making love. It implies and forcefully proclaims the goodness of sexual passion and erotic pleasure in the non-marital or at least in the premarital context. The Song of Songs celebrates the realm of sexual pleasure as a gift of creation. Scandalized by this book Christians searched for an interpretation that could avoid its obvious erotic content. Their search led to allegory.

Nearly all Jewish and Christian interpreters have viewed this poem

13. Cf. Sol Gordan and Roger Libby, eds., *Sexuality Today and Tomorrow* (Belmont, California, 1976), p. 311.

as an allegory, describing either God's love for the human soul or Christ's love for the Church. Its message, they argue, is about spiritual affection, not about human, erotic love. Thus, the interpreters nullify the celebration of sexual pleasure as a gift of creation.

Only recently have scholars questioned this allegorical "apology" for the Song of Songs. This recovery encourages contemporary believers to trust their own convictions about the goodness of sexual pleasure, even in the non-marital context¹⁴.

In the words of Capuchin scripture scholar K. Luke, there are indications that go to show that the lovers in the Song of Songs are not married, or at least not yet married¹⁵. In large polygamous families there used to be love affairs between half-brothers and half-sisters: Amnon, David's son, raped Tamar, the sister of Absalom (2 Sam 13:1-39). To preclude such eventualities, there used to be strict and stringent laws, such as the decalogue in Lev 18. Accordingly, we cannot think of boys and girls coming together freely and openly and making love in public. This problem does not arise when we remember that Song is a work of "high" literature, and not an account of what was actually taking place in ancient Israel.

Women daydreaming about their prospective husbands is a theme well attested in ancient oriental literature, writes Luke. There is a Sumerian saying: "For whom shall I reserve my vulva?" The speaker is a maiden who is soon going to be given in marriage and entertains all sort of fanciful reveries.

Texts in Sumerian dealing with the sacred marriage between Dumuzi and Inanna, the god and goddess of love, dwell at length on wooing and courtship. A poem known as "the Sister's Message", describes how Dumuzi's sister Geshtinanna happened to meet Inanna who told her of her longing for her brother: "As I was strolling, as I was strolling, as I was strolling by the house, my dear Inanna saw me. O my brother, what did she tell me, and what more did she say to me? O my brother, of love, allure, and sweetest of sweet things, my dear adorable Inanna on her part disclosed things to me! When I was addressing myself to some errand she came across you, my beloved man, and took to you and delighted in you at the first glance... she, O my good-looking brother,

14. Evelyn Whitehead and James Whitehead, *A Sense of Sexuality*, pp. 93-107.

15. K. Luke, "Courtship and Wooing in the Biblical World", Unpublished notes, St. Francis Theological College, Kottayam, 2000, pp. 1-2.

wore herself out moaning to me... O my brother, smiting her hips in anguish does my sweet darling pass the day."¹⁶

The main thing here is Inanna's longing for the presence of Dumuzi who is himself yearning for her company.

Yearning for the company of the boy is the theme of the following love song from Egypt: "My brother, it is pleasant to go to the pond in order to bathe me in your presence, that I may let you see my body in my tunic of finest royal linen, when it is wet and clings to my body."

The boy's longing comes to expression in the following piece: "I see my sister coming and my heart rejoices. My arms are opened wide to embrace her, and my heart rejoices upon its place... eternally, when the mistress comes to me."¹⁷

Mutual, reciprocal longing is had when the couple are not in possession of each other; this is the case with the boy and the girl in the Song of Songs, concludes Luke.

Mind of Christ

All of us - single or married - look to Jesus Christ as the paradoxical instructor on the good news about sex. The Bible gives us no information of Jesus' sexual life, content with the assurance that he is "like us in all ways except sin." This unmarried and childless person shows us many ways to love. And from his life we learn the criterion of Christian love: mutual respect rather than coercion or selfishness, the deepening of commitment and fidelity, the healing of injuries, the quickening of courage¹⁸. Jesus emphasized the value of the whole person, as a child of God and as one having the potential for growth and change. He further indicated that the meaning of life and personal fulfillment are found in the love of God and in caring human relationships. Facilitation of personal growth and loving relationship, then, can be understood as general goals of morality. And these general goals operate as guidelines for sexual expression as well.

Perhaps re-acquainting ourselves with the one place Jesus deals with the issue of a single person and his or her obligations to chastity, can help us adopt a pastoral attitude. In Matthew 19:3-12 in the prohibition

16. Specimens in T. Jacobsen, *The Treasures of Darkness. A History of Mesopotamian Religion* (New Haven, 1976), pp. 27-32.
17. A. Erman, *The Ancient Egyptians. A Sourcebook of Their Writings* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1966), pp. 242-251.
18. Evelyn Whitehead and James Whitehead, *A Sense of Sexuality*, pp. 22-37.

of divorce the apostles protest over the stringency of Jesus' expectations of monogamy. He responds, "not everyone receives this teaching, but those to whom God gives it." If Jesus can both lay down the challenge of an entirely different way of being male or female and then leave it to those who receive it, we can be at least as confident that God's grace will seek out and find those single adults whose secure possession of their natural gifts is the foundation for their using those gifts according to the mind of Christ.

Moral Aspects of Sexual Pleasure

If we accept that acts of mutual affection within the context of Christian ethics are lawful for singles, are there any principles for their practice? The principles of judging the morality of interpersonal relationships and acts of mutual affection among singles are the same as those for other persons. Responsible relationships and acts should be guided by one basic principle: Relationships which foster growth and integration are morally good. More specifically, increased physical intimacy in a relationship should always be matched by increased commitment to that relationship. As intimacy grows, so should the commitment to each other. As the commitment grows, so does the intimacy. If the mutual commitment is shaky, the friends had better ease up on the intimacy. Intimacy should not run ahead of commitment. When people move one inch toward commitment and a mile toward intimacy everything is thrown off balance. There is no solid foundation for love, and the result is frustration and chaos¹⁹.

For this reason many single persons realize that casual, self-indulging sexuality can never make one happy. To treat the other as an object of genital gratification leaves one feeling harsh, empty and sadly unfulfilled. Real love can best be experienced between single persons when they reverence each other's integrity in God, when they treat each other gently, respectfully and with courtesy.

Sexual pleasure does not call for a special moral treatment, says Bernard Häring²⁰: "Nor can it be held that failure to control self in the matter of sexual passion of love is to be judged more harshly than failure

19. Richard Foster, *Money, Sex and Power* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1985), pp. 114-133.

20. For a more systematic and detailed presentation of the morality of sexual pleasure, see Felix Podimattam, *Sex Ethics: Critical Issues for the Third Millennium* (New Delhi: Media House, 1999), pp. 47-128.

to control the destructive passion of anger, or hate.... There is no morality especially applicable to the sixth commandment; it is ruled by the same general norms and principles that govern the rest of morality."²¹

The following moral principles surrounding pleasure in general listed by William Barclay are equally valid for sexual pleasure²². First, no pleasure can be right if its effects on the person who enjoys it are harmful. Any pleasure which leaves a Man less physically fit, less mentally alert, less morally sensitive is wrong. Second, no pleasure can be right if its effect on others is harmful. Third, a pleasure which becomes an addiction can never be right. The minute a Man feels that some pleasure is gripping him in such a way that he cannot do without it, he will be well advised to avoid it before it breaks him. Fourth, a pleasure is wrong, if to enjoy it the essentials of life have to take less than their proper place. Anything in life that gets out of proportion is wrong. Whenever any pleasure annexes time and money which should have gone to things and to people of greater importance in life, it is wrong. Fifth, any pleasure which can be a source of danger to others must be carefully thought about. This is not something on which we can lay down definite rules and regulations. It is something for an individual's conscience to decide within the context of the life he has to live. But one is selfish if one insists on one's own pleasure in that which may ruin one's brother or sister. Finally, the ultimate test of any pleasure is this: Can it bear the scrutiny of God?

Moral truth is not discovered in the same way as an archeological treasure is unearthed. Moral truth emerges in the dynamics of human living from a whole constellation of value factors. Moral truth is discovered (fashioned) by persons as they endeavor to shape a mode of existence which they regard to be human or a type of conduct which they judge to be humanizing. Insights will vary from culture to culture, and, within a given culture, from era to era. Catholic moral teaching down the centuries is replete with examples of different perceptions of truth.

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21. Bernard Haring, *Shalom: Peace* (N.Y: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1968), p.190

22. William Barclay, *Ethics in a Permissive Society* (London, 1971), pp. 120-124.

A Comprehensive Vision of Sexuality from a Christian Perspective

Hormis Mynatty

Dr. Hormis Mynatty, Professor of Moral Theology at St. Joseph Pontifical Seminary, Aluva tries to articulate an outlook on Sexuality that is integrated and coherent to the current philosophical and theological position in the Church. Sexuality is a radical and central dimension of human life. Though it was often most misunderstood and misinterpreted, today we have come to realize that it is a very enriching factor, affecting all dimensions of human life, namely physical, spiritual, psychological, and emotional that helps ourselves relate to other people, to the society and to God. This wholistic vision of sexuality inspires us to accept it as God's gift. Hence the importance of chastity, which is to be practiced both by the married and the unmarried, to safeguard sexuality against its mere self-centred and self-indulgent expression.

There is no doubt that Sexuality is such a central, powerful and radical dimension of human life, which deserves our constant reflection and appreciation. However, anybody familiar with history knows that this is a reality misunderstood and misinterpreted to a great extent even in Christian tradition. There was a tendency in the past to conceive sexuality as a regrettable necessity. There were religious sects and philosophical outlooks, which depicted sexuality as basically evil. Then sexuality was presented often as animalistic and demonic. This trend regarded the sexual sins as the worst kind. Consequently there was also a preoccupation with sexual morality to the extent of disregarding moral considerations of other areas of human life.

However, today we realize that any proper outlook on human person shows that sexuality is a very enriching dimension of human life and at the same time it can also be destructive if not handled properly. The scope of this article is to present very briefly an integrated and comprehensive vision on human sexuality especially from a Christian perspective.

1. Introduction

We are trying to articulate an outlook on human sexuality that is integrated in itself and coherent with current philosophical and theological positions of the Church. As Philip Keane points out what we urgently need is an authentic and correct theological perspective on sexuality. Any specific questions on sexual ethics can be dealt with properly only as based on this overall theological perspective¹. If we do not have such an integrated vision of sexuality it is very probable that we may run into problems in our moral evaluation of sexual issues. Hence the need of developing a proper, integrated and comprehensive vision on human sexuality.

In order to develop a proper theological perspective on sexuality, as certain Catholic theologians point out, two important factors have to be given adequate importance. First, we have to recognize that human sexuality is a profound good given by God to human persons as part of creation. The second, sexuality is a gift that touches human persons on all levels of their existence. It is a reality which affects the whole gamut of human life². This becomes a basic or ontological determinant of human existence. There can never be an occasion a person is devoid of his or her sexuality.

Sexuality affects all dimensions of a person's life, namely the physical, spiritual, psychological, emotional and relational. Sexuality is the fundamental manner in which we relate to ourselves, to other people, to the society and to God. The CDF document 'Declaration on Sexual Ethics' affirms three basic characteristics of sexuality: "The human person is so profoundly affected by sexuality that it must be considered as one of the factors which give to each individual's life the principal trait that distinguishes it. In fact, it is from sex that the human person receives the characteristics which on the biological, psychological and spiritual levels make that person a man or woman, and largely condition him or her progress towards maturity and insertion into society" (no.1). We always exist and function as sexed persons. There can be no moment in our life when sexuality is not part of our life. Human sexuality is all embracing. It affects the whole human being. It is impossible to distance ourselves from our sexuality. Since sexuality touches every aspect of the personality, there are distinctive manly and womanly way of

1. P.S. Keane, *Sexual Morality, A Catholic Perspective*, New York, 1997, p.3

2. *Ibid.* p. 3-4

understanding, feeling and acting³. Therefore, human sexuality is thus a wholistic and comprehensive gift. If we lose sight of this comprehensiveness that will lead to an inadequate conception of human sexuality. We are examining briefly whether the Christian tradition has succeeded in maintaining this comprehensive vision of sexuality or not.

2. Sexuality and Marriage in the Scriptures

The two creation accounts, Yahwist and Priestly give us a proper orientation towards the nature and purpose of human sexuality. In Genesis 1:27-28 it is stated that God created man in His own image, and male and female He created them. God blessed them saying be fruitful and multiply. That means God created the human persons as sexed persons, as male and female, and with equal dignity and it is indicated that differentiation of sexes is in view of procreation. But this is not the only vision of sexuality in Genesis.

In the older Yahwist tradition in Gen. 2:18-24 it is specifically indicated that the creation of man as male and female is in view of conjugal love, that they two may become one flesh. God found that it is not good for man to be alone and therefore He created a helper fit for him. The response of the man before the female is that "this at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh". Therefore man leaves his father and mother and cleaves to his wife and they two become one flesh. This account of Genesis specifically points out that the woman is being formed from the very substance of the man's own body and this acknowledges their equality and partnership in marital relationship. This differentiation of sexes is in view of conjugal love.

We can observe certain tension between the above said two traditions. The older Yahwist tradition speaks of sexuality as intended for mutual love in becoming one flesh (Gen. 2:24). Here the very purpose of sexuality is the conjugal love of man and woman. The woman is presented not merely as an object of sexual gratification but as an equal life partner, a helpmate for man. As certain authors point out this solemn and sublime bringing together of the first couple by God, shows God the author of marriage and the "two in one flesh" imagery indicates monogamy as the ideal⁴. At the same time the later Priestly tradition on the other hand saw

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3. G.D. Coleman, *Human Sexuality, An All Embracing Gift*, New York, 1992, p. 4-5
 4. The Pope John Centre (ed), *Human Sexuality and Personhood*, Massachusetts, 1981, p.17.

human sexuality in view of procreation - be fruitful and multiply (Gen 1:28). Those two accounts cannot be quoted in isolation emphasizing one or the other dimensions of sexuality. Both Genesis accounts are complementary giving equal importance to the unitive and procreative ends of marital sexuality. As it is mentioned above, it is a reality meant to lead man and woman to a one-flesh relationship in marriage and also to the procreation of children. There is a tension between these two meanings of sexuality when considered in isolation. This tension was so conspicuous in the history of the Church, giving one-sided importance to the procreative dimension of sexuality, largely disregarding the other dimensions. This tension continues even today in some quarters.

Certain authors correctly point out that while we give undue importance to the fact that human person is created in the image and likeness of God, rather ignored the equally important fact that man is created as male and female by God⁵. God saw all creation including sexually differentiated human persons as very good. Therefore, our sexual identity as male and female persons is a part of the divine creation. It is an undeniable data of the Holy Scriptures that sexuality is a divine gift, which must be appreciated and respected. As Gerald Coleman correctly points out "human sexuality is a primal dimension of each person, a mysterious blend of spirit and body, which shares in God's own creative love and life"⁶.

In the Scriptures we find a very healthy and positive outlook on sexuality. It differs from many philosophical outlooks, which put sexuality on the level of an inferior human attribute and a characteristic of the fallen human nature. In the biblical perspective sexuality is part of the divine plan and has nothing to do with the fallen nature. It is basically good. At the same time sexuality is not divinized, that means, it is not seen as an attribute of God as the neighbouring Cananites of that time held. Sexuality is not a divine attribute but unique to created beings and a gift of God. Throughout the scriptures sexuality is presented as good, natural and normal. It was not isolated from the rest of human existence. Sexual behaviour is considered very much part of life in view of marriage where man and woman enter into a one-flesh relationship as equal partners. Even though sexuality can be misused one cannot obscure the fundamental theological and anthropological fact that human sexuality is something good and a gift of God.

5. P.K. Jewett, *Man as Male and Female*, Grand Rapids, 1975, p.19

6. G.D Coleman, *Human Sexuality*, p.3

In the NT Jesus basically accepts OT vision of sexuality and marriage, which he presents as a binding law for his followers. "From the beginning God made them male and female. For this reason, man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife and they two shall become one flesh. What God has joined together, man must not separate" (Mt. 19: 4-5). Jesus continues to state that whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against his wife and if she divorces her husband and marries another, commits adultery. Here Jesus seems to accept fully the sanctity and goodness of sexuality as a gift of God and gives a vision of absolute indissolubility of marriage. In the NT there is a deliberate opposition to selfish sexual behaviour and to sexual relations outside the marital relationship. Certain authors point out that Jesus was pleading for the fuller recognition of woman's dignity. Actually Jesus was protecting women from sexual exploitation. What Jesus advocated was life long fidelity in sexuality in marriage⁷. According to St. Paul wives are equal to their husbands in having a right to the sexual expression of married love (1 Cor 7:4). He also provided the clearest statement in NT of the equal dignity of woman with man (Gal 3:28).

The provision given by Jesus and St. Paul to remain unmarried (Mt. 19:12; 1 Cor 7:7) does not mean human sexuality and marriage is something inferior to celibacy. According to NT understanding both marriage and celibacy are gifts of God. Human sexuality is present in all human expressions of love. The Christian has a chance for the choice between the unique vocation of marital love and an alternate vocation which manifests human love in a non-genital way. This suggests that restriction of sexual expression or chastity has to be practiced both by the married and the unmarried equally.

The gift of human sexuality is thus a wholistic or comprehensive reality according to the biblical tradition. However, it must be realistically admitted that the Christian tradition across the centuries has not always succeeded in maintaining a positive and comprehensive outlook on human sexuality due to various historical influences. Hence often the comprehensive vision on this reality is lost. Limiting the comprehensive nature of sexuality will necessarily lead to an inadequate moral and theological understanding of this reality and related issues.

7. D.G. McCarthy, E.J. Bayer, J.A. Leies (eds), *Handbook on Critical Sexual Issues*, Massachusetts, 1989, p. 7-8

3. Inadequate Conceptions of Human Sexuality

We have seen that human sexuality is something good having physical, personal and social dimensions. If somebody loses this integrated and comprehensive vision on this reality it can lead to inadequate theories on sexuality. We deal very briefly with such inadequate theories of sexuality which emerged in history and which had enormous negative influence in the Catholic understanding on this reality and in Catholic sexual ethics.

3.1. *Human sexuality considered as fundamentally evil*

Certain quasi-religious sects and philosophical trends in the early centuries which diverged from mainstream Christianity often could not appreciate the goodness of human sexuality and often characterized it as something evil.

For example the Encratites, the followers of a rigorous Christian sect, held the view that the counsel of virginity is a law for all Christians. Montanists (2nd century) also were a similar regorist Christian group. They condemned sexual activity as a whole as evil. Gnosticism (1st and 2nd centuries) was a philosophical system, which taught fundamental dualism of spirit and matter. Three prominent versions of Gnosticism were Mauicheanism, Abigensianism and Jansenism. Gnosticism holds on to a dualistic view of the world where there is a constant conflict between two co-equal principles - a good principle that govern the spiritual realities including the soul and an evil principle that govern the material realities including the human body.

The above said attitude towards human body and sexuality is incompatible with the Christian conceptions that sexuality is the creation and gift of God and then it must be good. Any basic conception of a basic God-given goodness of sexuality prompts us to reject all systems that see human sexuality as fundamentally evil. The position that sexuality is an evil is basically anti-Christian⁸.

3.2. *One-sided emphasis on the physical aspect of sexuality*

The physical dimension of sexuality is very important and has to be incorporated into any comprehensive vision on this reality. But this dimension of sexuality cannot be exaggerated to the extent of forgetting equally important other dimensions. The gnostic dualism saw sexuality as exclusively physical and for this reason described it as essentially

8. V.J. Genovesi, *In Pursuit of Love, Catholic Morality and Human Sexuality*, Wilmington, 1987, p.135; P.S. Keane, *Sexual Morality*, p.6

evil. The early Christian thinkers strongly reacted to this gnostic notion that sexuality is fundamentally evil and tried to restore its essential goodness and sanctity. But Christianity and other schools of thought which helped it did not succeed properly to overcome the one-sided emphasis on the physical dimension of sexuality. The excessive emphasis on the physical dimension of sexuality finds expression in two main approaches to this reality namely sex is merely for pleasure and sex is primarily for procreation.

3.2.1. *Sex for pleasure*

One of the forms of exaggeration of the physical aspect of human sexuality is found in those systems, which give one-sided emphasis on the sexual pleasure associated with sexuality. The Physical pleasure associated with sexuality is part of God's plan for humanity and there is nothing evil in it. The Christian tradition within the influence of Stoics and the early Jewish thinkers failed to give sufficient value to physical pleasure inherent in sexuality⁹. Sexual pleasure was always perceived with suspicion. But at the same time physical pleasure cannot be made the only or the major focus of an approach to sexuality. Overemphasis on physical pleasure in sexuality has been a problem throughout human history and it is becoming a pressing problem today. Sexual hedonism perceives sexual pleasure as the primary objective of sexuality. The net result is that the wholistic vision of sexuality is lost sight of.

3.2.2. *Procreationism*

Procreationism is the approach to human sexuality that holds that the only purpose of human sexuality is the reproduction of children. This was the idea, which was prominent in all schools, which influenced early Christian thinkers to counteract those who denied the basic goodness of sexuality. Therefore, in the teaching of the Fathers of the Church on sexuality and marriage there is a one-sided emphasis on the procreative dimension of sexuality to the extent of disregarding completely its relational, personal and social dimensions. The Christian thinkers have overcome to some extent the notion that sexuality is evil but tended to stick on to the notion that sexuality is for procreation. The catholic perspective on sexuality for centuries was giving one-sided emphasis to its procreative dimension heavily influenced by the following trends.

9. G. Moore, *The Body in Context, Sex and Catholicism*, London, 1992, p. 43-63.

Stoic ethic: One of the most important influence on the thinking of the fathers of the Church was the stoic ethic according to which answers to all moral questions could be derived from nature. According to this perspective, the nature of sexual organs and sexual intercourse is to effect procreation. If this is the case then genital organs and the sexual acts should be used exclusively for this purpose. This philosophy restricts sexual intercourse only to times when procreation is possible. This position strictly prohibited intercourse during pregnancy or when the couple does not entertain the hope of pregnancy because of sterility or old age.

Jewish Heritage: Judaism exercised a great influence, in the matters of sexual ethics on the early Christian Fathers. According to the first century Jewish thinkers like Flavuis Joseph, Philo of Alexandria and others who influenced the Christian intellectuals of the early centuries, sexual intercourse is allowed only for procreation. They even condemned a marriage with a women who is sterile.

The Fathers of the Church defended the sanctity and goodness of marital sexuality against those who denied the goodness of sexuality and also against immorality and sexual promiscuity. In this attempt they proposed a doctrine on sexuality in which two points were emphasized: (1) Sexual intercourse is only allowed for the natural finality which is procreation and (2) considered sexual pleasure as something evil. According to this view sexual intercourse which is not performed for procreation is done for mere lust and pleasure which is reprehensible and unlawful.

Primitive scientific knowledge: In the early centuries it was thought that the responsibility for reproduction rested with the male who introduced his 'seed' into the fertile ground, the female. It is thought that the female had what was necessary for the growth of the child but did not contribute anything to initiate conception. The male seed was believed to contain the entirety of the human person in potency. It was only in 1827 with the discovery of ovulation the active role of the female in reproduction was recognized. In 1875 Oscar Hertwig showed that fertilization is effected by the union of ovum and sperm. And it was only in the recent past scientists understood that every sexual intercourse is not leading to procreation¹⁰. The Fathers of the church used this limited and misleading conception of sexuality and procreation, through

10. V.J. Genovesi, *In Pursuit of Love*, p. 138; F. Podimattam, *Sex Ethics*, p. 64-65.

the mould of the above said philosophical thinking in order to explain the phenomenon of human reproduction. Therefore, they also came to a one-sided emphasis on the procreative purpose of sexuality disregarding the equally important other dimensions of this reality. This unscientific data which influenced the Christian thinkers for centuries considered sexual intercourse simply as a biological process meant exclusively for procreation.

4. Fathers of the Church

In the first centuries the Christians had to defend the goodness of sexuality and marriage against the above said different currents of Gnosticism which denied the sanctity and goodness of sexuality and different currents of sexual promiscuity. Relying on the scriptural vision on sexuality the Fathers defended the goodness of sexuality and marriage. But since the Christians had to be more perfect than the pagans, they interpreted the scriptural data very rigidly as the Stoics and Jewish thinkers, permitting marital sexuality only for procreation and not for mere sexual pleasure.

Defending the sanctity of sexuality and dignity of marriage against Gnostics Clement of Alexandria (150-216) writes that the Christian law demands that husbands should use their wives moderately and only for the raising of children. For him, to have sexual intercourse for purposes other than to procreate children is to do injury to nature. Origen (180-254) also affirms that a Christian does not commit adultery if he has intercourse with his wife for the purpose of procreation. Therefore, no intercourse among the couples is allowed during pregnancy. St. Ambrose (339-397) held the view that sexual act can be justified only for procreation and that also is allowed only as long as the couple is young enough to entertain the hope of offspring. Under the impact of manicheism, Gregory of Nyssa (330-390) developed the theory that sexual differentiation derives from a "second creation" by God. In this view, the exercise of sexuality becomes essentially a consequence of sin¹¹. However, St. John Chrysostom (350-407) in the East seems to hold a different view on sexuality and marriage. He recognized the nobility of marital act insofar as it was an occasion for conjugal love. According to him marital intercourse is lawful, even when procreation is not intended or not possible. Unfortunately he could not influence the western tradition where St. Augustine dominated the scene.

11. B. Häring, *Free and Faithful in Christ*, Vol II, p. 513-514

According to St. Augustine (354-430) who influenced the Christian tradition in this field for centuries, the natural purpose of marriage is procreation. Sexual intercourse that goes beyond this necessity is not led by reason but by passion. St. Augustine could never appreciate the pleasure involved in sexual intercourse. As it is pointed out by Bernard Häring, Augustine could not free himself from the view that pleasure in conjugal life is wholly contaminated by concupiscence. For him the dreadful consequences of sexual pleasure made the conjugal act a shameful act and it is permitted only for the direct purpose of procreation. Augustine thinks that the unruly concupiscence of the flesh or sexual desire is the cause or penalty of original sin¹². Therefore, he has a very negative view of sexual desire and sexual pleasure as the Stoic and the Jewish sources.

This regorist view on sexuality and marriage were questioned by Christian thinkers like John Damascene (675-749) in the East and Peter Abelard (1075-1144) in the West. According to them to feel sexual pleasure in marital act is something natural and unavoidable and therefore it can never be a sin. Sexual intercourse is allowed in marriage only for procreation but also for avoiding incontinence and adultery. Therefore, according to them sexual intercourse may go against the loving relation to God only when spouses seek sexual pleasure in an egoistic way. But this more positive and lenient view on marital sexuality did not attract the attention of the official Church authorities at that time.

5. St. Thomas Aquinas and the subsequent tradition

St. Thomas (1225-1274) also was under the grip of a pre-scientific data with regard to human sexuality. He considered that all sexual activity is on the level of animality and is determined by natural law. There is no need of any rational decision on this level. Anything that is led by natural law is good and all things opposed to it is evil. Then the natural finality of sexual act is procreation. Therefore, he concludes that sexual activity exists for the end of procreation. Hence St. Thomas seems to follow basically St. Augustine.

It is observed that St. Thomas' idea of sexuality remains undeveloped. He simply utilized the existing biological data of that time that human sexuality is merely biological and was oriented to a single purpose, namely procreation. The primitive scientific knowledge of that time that male sperm contained in it the full potentiality of human life also supported

12. *Ibid*

the above said one-sided emphasis on the biological view of sexuality. According to this conception those sexual acts which are not performed in such way as to allow procreation were considered equivalent to homicide. Following St. Augustine, St. Thomas also held the view that marital sexuality has its principal end the procreation and its secondary end is relief of concupiscence. Therefore, in the Thomistic notion on sexuality there is an undue emphasis on its physical dimension to the extent of disregarding totally its relational dimension. Even though his position seems to be logical, it is built upon faulty premises and inaccurate data. In spite of its limitations the Augustinian-Thomistic vision on sexuality and marriage have been accepted in history as the authentic tradition of the Church. The official teaching of the magisterium, the Catechism of the Council of Trent published in 1566 listed three goods of marriage - offspring, fidelity and sacrament - following the three goods of marriage proposed by St. Augustine, insisting on the primacy of the first over the others.

We find an exception to this traditional teaching on sexuality in St. Alphonsus Ligouri (1696-1781) who is considered an authority in the field of moral theology at that time. Fully aware of the Augustinian-Thomistic tradition which permitted sexual intercourse in marriage only for the procreation of children and as remedy for concupiscence, Alphonsus proposed that "the marital act is in itself permissible and honorable" as an expression of the conjugal love and fidelity of the couple¹³. And he developed a doctrine on the purpose of sexuality in marriage with a special emphasis on the synthesis of the procreative and unitive dimensions rejecting the Augustinian one-sided emphasis on procreative dimension. This positive approach though triggered some rethinking in this field, did not influence much the official position of the church.

In the Code of Canon law promulgated in 1917 it is stated that the primary end of marriage is the procreation and nurture of children and its secondary end is the remedying of concupiscence (Canon 1013). That means there can never be an occasion where marital sexuality can be used for any other purpose avoiding its primary end, procreation. This hierarchy of ends emphasise a subordination of ends. The secondary end is always subordinated to the primary and there can be never an occasion where the primary is sacrificed for the secondary. That means marital sexuality is primarily only for procreation and nothing

13. *Ibid.* p. 521

else. This distinction between primary and secondary ends dominated any discussion on marital sexuality for several centuries. In order to find a balanced vision on sexuality and marriage in the history of the Church we have to wait till Vat. II.

6. Personal and Relational dimensions of sexuality

Only when we overcome the above said inadequate emphasis on the physical dimension of human sexuality and positively appreciate this reality we become aware of its relational meaning. We realize how sexuality deepens and enriches our interpersonal relationship. It helps our basic understanding of self, other people and God. This is very evident in marital relationship. It is not limited to marital relationship alone. When we realize that human sexuality is much more than physical or genital it contributes to all human relationships.

But this emphasis on the personal and relational dimensions of sexuality should not lead to the opposite direction of disregarding the equally important procreative dimension. We have to reject also any conception of human sexuality which gives one-sided importance to its personal and romantic aspects disregarding the other equally important dimensions.

Till 19th century nobody cared for the Catholic perspective whether marital sex needed to be a "loving activity". There was only an overemphasis on its primary purpose namely procreation. But by the end of 20th century the progress in medical science, Anthropology, Psychology and so on provoked further the enquiry into the meaning and relevance of sexuality in marital life as a whole. The development in the field of medical science, for example, especially the discovery of Ogino and Knaus in 1930 with regard to ovulation and periodic infertility in women have opened new perspectives concerning fertility. It was known that every marital act is not leading to procreation and procreation is something, which seldom happens. Then the sexual morality which was built upon the sex-procreation link was seriously called into question.

Recent contributions of biology, psychology, sociology etc. together with such movements as women's liberation and feminism also contributed to the growth of an adequate and balanced view on sexuality. Sexuality is seen as that part of personhood which enables a person to enter into relationship with other people. Its purpose is to foster love and the mutual sharing which love implies. This is really actualized in marital sexuality where it is an expression of mutual love between the

partners. It is a language of self-giving and personal commitment to the partner. As certain authors point out by relating one person to another sexuality has both a relational dimension and also a social dimension especially when it is leading to the procreation of a child¹⁴. It is within this relational context that one must consider the biological and genital aspects of sexuality.

By the turn of 20th century, several Catholic authors and moral theologians began to argue that conjugal act is meant to express conjugal love and without love mere physical aspect of sexual union is immoral. They criticized the Augustinian-Thomistic tradition which gives primary importance to the procreative dimension of sexuality disregarding its equally important relational meaning. They questioned centuries old stoic-cum-Christian insistence on the primacy of procreation in marital sexuality¹⁵.

Gradually catholic thinkers and moral theologians began to argue that every marital act should be loving and relation oriented and not merely procreation oriented. The relation-serving values that are always operative should take precedence over the procreation-serving values that are operative only occasionally. In other words the loving-relation between the couple began to be considered the primary end of marital sexuality without disregarding its procreative meaning.

As sexuality in marriage came to be more positively appreciated, it was recognized that the couple can engage in sexual intercourse as an expression of their mutual love, apart from the procreative purpose. The justifying reason for marital act need not be the procreative intention alone, it could be also expression of conjugal love. This unitive and relational dimensions of marital sexuality gained equal importance with its procreative purpose.

By the time of Vatican II a number of Catholic moral theologians have come a long way from the view that conjugal act is purely a mechanism for procreation. According to them conjugal act within marriage is designed by God as a sign of love. At the same time against the growing contraceptive mentality at that time they also insisted on its

14. The Pope John Centre (ed), *Human Sexuality and Personhood*, p.158

15. B. Häring, *Free and Faithful in Christ*, Vol II, p. 509; *Handbook on critical sexual Issues*, p.30; The authors who initiated this discussion are; Dietrich Von Hildebrand, *Marriage*, 1929; Heribert Doms, *The Meaning of Marriage*, 1935; B. Haring, *Law of Christ*, 1953; J. Fuchs, *Theologia Moralis Generalis*, 1960.

procreative purpose. Marital sexuality came to be appreciated positively with its full significance. Even the physical side of marriage was seen to sanctify the whole marital life¹⁶.

This comprehensive view on sexuality and marriage finds acceptance in Vatican II. Removing 18 centuries of fear and suspicion of sexuality among Christians, the council Fathers wholeheartedly state: "the acts themselves, which are proper to conjugal love and which are exercised in accord with genuine human dignity, must be honoured with great reverence" (GS 51). Speaking about expressing conjugal love through marital sexuality the Council states: "This love is uniquely expressed and perfected through marital act. The actions within marriage by which the couple are united intimately and chastely are noble and worthy. Expressed in a manner which is truly human these actions signify and promote mutual self-giving" (GS 49). Their emphasis on the relational dimension of marital sexuality in no way disregard its procreative purpose. It is said that marriage and conjugal love are by their nature ordained to generation and education of children but that does not make other ends of marriage less important (GS 50). Abandoning forever the centuries old primary-secondary division of the ends of marital sexuality, Vat. II gives equal importance to each end i.e. both conjugal love and procreation. This view was the result of appreciating human sexuality wholistically.

This positive appreciation of sexuality and marriage is reflected clearly in the new code of Canon law. "Marriage is ordered to the well-being of the spouses and to the procreation and upbringing of children" (CCEO 776; CIC 1055). This code does not mention about the ends being primary and secondary. The Catholic Church has changed its law to be in line with its present theology on marriage and sexuality. The Catechism of the Catholic Church also states that "the spouses' union achieves the twofold ends of marriage: the good of the spouses themselves and the transmission of life". (No.2363).

7. A Wholistic Vision of Sexuality

From the above discussion on sexuality we come to understand that to depict it as something basically evil and inhuman is unchristian. The Judeo-Christian tradition holds that it is a pre-eminent divine gift. God created man, male and female. We cannot but appreciate this reality for whatever is created by God is very good. Human sexuality is something

16. *Critical sexual issues*, p.30

basically good and its sanctity has to be safeguarded and must be responsibly handled.

The philosophical trends as stoicism, gnosticism etc. could not appreciate the basic goodness of sexuality because they were founded on certain faulty premises like whatever is connected with the body is evil. The catholic thinkers also were influenced by these trends to a certain extent. Our understanding of human sexuality depends to a large extent on the way we perceive the human body. As a gift of God, human body and sexuality essentially integrated to it, is basically good and has to be positively appreciated. Human sexuality is fundamental modality of how we relate to other people, to ourselves and to God. It is being - a - man or being-a- woman in the world with others. Sexuality designates the meaning of being a sexual person. There is nothing to be ashamed of it. All the more there are sufficient reason to positively appreciate it and to be proud of it. It is simply a false spiritualism, which prompts one to consider sexuality as evil or as a humiliating reality.

We have also seen that the one-sided emphasis on the physical dimension of sexuality to the extent of denying its equally important relational (personal and social) dimension also will be misleading. It is true that human sexuality is supposed to lead to sexual pleasure and also to procreation. But to give onesided emphasis on either of these factors is to miss the proper meaning and functions of sexuality.

To reduce sexuality merely to a source of sensual pleasure is an exaggeration of the physical aspect of it to the extent of depersonalizing it. It confuses conjugal love with sex-consumerism where the sexual partner is considered merely as an object of sexual outlet. The physical pleasure attached to sexuality is good and part of God's design even though Christian tradition could not appreciate that dimension properly for a long time. But at the same time one cannot overemphasize this fact to the extent of neglecting other dimensions of this reality.

Those who hold that procreation is the primary or the only purpose of sexuality at the neglect of its relational dimension also is losing sight of a comprehensive vision on sexuality. Marital sexuality is not simply a mechanism for child making, equal importance has to be given to love making. There is no doubt that procreation is a very important purpose of marital sexuality and nobody can deny it but it has meaning only in the context of the couple "becoming one flesh". If we do not perceive sexual union in the context of a covenantal relationship of the couple, we cannot speak of sexuality in terms of procreation alone.

The most important dimension of human sexuality is its relational aspect - a reality that leads to intimate relationship on various levels. It is a reality which leads a man and a woman to one flesh relationship. This unitive dimension of sexuality is often disregarded with the preoccupation with its physical dimension, even in the Christian tradition for centuries. However, there was a gradual realization that any proper vision on sexuality should be a love-integrated sexuality. That means any proper sexual relationship should be a manifestation of the selfless love between two persons. According to Bernard Häring a loveless sexual act even when meant for procreation is missing the mark and therefore is sinful. Marital and familial life are primarily aimed at relationships and sexuality should be at the service of this love relationship. Vatican II has realistically admitted both meanings of sexuality giving equal importance to the conjugal union with procreation, not being one subordinated to the other as in the previous tradition. The conjugal love of the couple expressed sexually is supposed to flourish into the family, emphasizing its social dimension. Therefore, the relational meaning of sexuality is not restricted to an egoistic or romantic love relationship between the spouses but it has an equally important personal and social dimensions.

A wholistic vision on sexuality inspires us to accept it as an integral part of human life and rejoice in it as the gift of God. As Dietrich Von Hildebrand has pointed out human sexuality is all-embracing. It is total i.e. it affects the whole human being in all dimensions. One can never separate oneself from one's sexuality and the attempt to do so is extremely destructive. The attempt to distance oneself from one's sexuality will leave one fragmented. The same attention is needed not to neglect the equally important relational and procreative dimensions of this reality. Otherwise it can lead to an erroneous vision on sexuality which perceives it simply as a consumer good.

8. Authentic Sexual Expression Only in Marriage

From a comprehensive understanding of sexuality and long standing Christian tradition the sexual union has its rightful place only in marriage. The sexual encounter cannot be an expression of intimate love unless the partners are united in a deep and permanent commitment in marriage. Advocating an integralist approach (unitive and procreative) to human sexuality William E. May comes to the conclusion that genital sexual expression respects the dignity of human persons and the intrinsic

meaning of their sexual being only when it takes place between a man and a woman joined in a covenantal marriage¹⁷. The sexual union between two persons who are not permanently committed to each other in a covenant of love is simply a pretension and a lie. When they pretend to have a real relationship with their bodies, they are not actually having such a deep love relationship in real life. Only those who have given consent to be for each other for ever has sufficient justification to become one flesh through sexual encounter. This is the reason why Catholic tradition always depicts all auto-erotic activities, pre-marital and extra-marital sex etc. as morally evil and unacceptable. An auto-erotic quest rooted in basic selfishness depersonalizes sexual relationship and makes it dehumanizing and harmful for oneself and for the partner. Experimentation in the field of sexuality especially when other persons are involved is also seriously irresponsible.

9. Conclusion

In order to assess moral responsibility in the area of human sexuality we have to perceive sexuality as a comprehensive reality touching all levels of human existence. This task will not be easy. No one ever will completely succeed to integrate all the aspects of human sexuality. Therefore the search and struggle for the perfectly integrated sexuality should be an ongoing process. We are all pilgrims and therefore to be totally moral in the area of sexuality demands continuous effort. Asceticism and self-restraint in the area of sexuality are always needed. The Catholic Church is essentially correct in her moral care and concern for the area of sexuality. It is true that at times the Church's perspectives on sexuality had been negative or physical due to various influences, she has already succeeded in regaining an integrated vision of sexuality. She has surely been correct in perceiving sexuality as a complex reality in human life, calling for extreme moral sensitivity in this area.

Once we grasp the comprehensive view on sexuality, we can understand easily the catholic insistence on the virtue of chastity. Chastity is the motivation and practice that safeguard sexuality from mere self-centered and self-indulgent expression of it. It is to be practiced both by the married and the unmarried alike. This virtue requires an attitude to

17. K.T. McMahon, *Sexuality: Theological Voices*, Massachusetts, 1987, p. 84-90

integrate sexuality into one's life so that it may help to maintain the proper divine plan of sexuality¹⁸. Normally proper expressions of sexuality should be aimed at transmitting life and drawing persons together. Therefore, the morality of any sex act should be judged based on the criterion whether it serves the ends of sexuality and promotes the total welfare of the persons concerned. To indulge in sexual activities merely for pleasure is to depersonalize it and transform what is interpersonal and social into mere selfish affair. Therefore the virtue of chastity is to be practiced strictly both by the married and the unmarried alike.

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18. P.S. Keane, *Sexual Morality*, p.158; V.J. Genovesi, *The Pursuit of love*, p. 146-148

Sexuality in Sikhism

Franco Mulakkal

Though there does not exist in Sikhism any developed Theology on Sexuality, Dr.Franco Mulakkal has succeeded in collecting important insights on sexuality from the available teachings of the Gurus and other Sikh writers. Self-control is considered an important virtue that helps humans to have a balanced life. It is the domination of the lower faculties by the higher ones. By conquering oneself one is the Master of the world. This would exclude all forms of sexual expression outside marriage. The sexual power must be put to use positively to create a family through legitimate means, maintain it through love, and strengthen it through mutual affection between husband and wife. Thus the 'sexy' body is put into service of the family, the society and humanity as a whole. Besides, woman receives great veneration in Sikh society. She is in no way considered inferior to man. Any behaviour not in keeping with the status of woman is rejected outright.

Sexuality is a subject not much talked about in the religious horizon of Sikh theology or philosophy. None of the Gurus spoke elaborately about this aspect of life. Most of the books and articles are written about the origin and development of Sikhism¹ in different periods, on the Gurus, on the Sikh *Maryada*, *Sanskara*, etc. Therefore there does not exist a developed branch of theology or philosophy on this matter. At the same time, we can still gather some ideas from the teachings of the Gurus, and other Sikh writers.

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- 1 Sikh religion is called 'Sikhism'. The word Sikh is derived from the Pali *sikha* and the Sanskrit *sikshya*, meaning "disciple". The Sikhs are the disciples of ten Gurus beginning with Nanak and ending with Gobind Singh. A Sikh has been defined as "one who believes in the ten Gurus and the Granth Sahib, a Scripture compiled by the fifth Guru, Arjan Dev, in 1604." Cf. "Sikhism", in *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, ed. Mircea Eliade vol.3, MacMillan Publishing Company, London, 1987, p.315.

Sikhism, founded by Guru Nanak², came into being during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries³ and is closely associated with Punjab⁴, its homeland. Punjabi is the mother tongue. *Punjabi* culture and Sikh practices are interwoven.⁵ The source of Sikh teaching, the holy book is called the *Adi Granth*.⁶ The teachings of the *Granth* are by no means limited to those of Nanak. But they do occupy a central place in it.⁷

The world was in ferment. It was an age of persecution and religious intolerance. All around there was chaos and violence due to political instability. The Turks and the Afghans had ravaged the country. Finally, in 1526 AD, the Mughal empire was established in India by Babur. Internally the "dissolution of medieval civilization was already in progress."⁸ It is said that when evil exceeds all limits, God takes pity on His creation and sends a messiah to show light to the people. K. S. Duggal says that Guru Nanak was one of such messiahs.⁹

Socially and economically the picture was equally gloomy. As a matter of fact it was a society in which there was no dignity of human life,

2 Generally he is considered as the founder of the Sikh religion. I say this because even today there exists a school of thought that regards him as just a religious reformer.

3 W. Norman Brown, *India, Pakistan, Ceylon*, ed. University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 1960, p. 93, as cited in John A. Hutchinson, *Paths of Faith* IInd edition, McGraw-Hill Book Company, New York, 1975, p. 191.

4 In Persian this word "punj-ab" means 'five waters' and refers to the land watered by the five rivers of the Indus. The five rivers are Satlaj, Beas, Ravi, Chenab and Jhelum. Kundra and Bawa, Cf. *Swan History of Punjab*, Neelam Publishers, Jalandhar, 1970, p.2.

5 This area, divided in 1947 between Pakistan and India, is most closely associated with Sikh history and the majority of major Sikh shrines are located here. Cf. E. M. Nesbitt, "Sikhism" in Hutchinson *Encyclopedia of Living Faith*, Random Century Group Ltd, London, 1991, p. 410.

6 *Adi Granth* is also called *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*- in so as it is considering as a living Guru.

7 W. Norman Brown, *India, Pakistan, Ceylon*, ... p. 93. as cited in John A. Hutchinson, *Paths of Faith* IInd edition, McGraw-Hill Book Company, New York, 1975, p. 195.

8 A. S. Sethi and Sutar Singh, "Sikhism and Interfaith Dialogue" in *Comparative Religion*, ed. by Amarjit Singh Sethi and Reinhard Pummer, Vikas Publishing House, New Delhi, 1979, p. 101.

9 K. S. Duggal, *Select Sikh Scriptures*- 1, Guru Nanak, UBS Publishers, Distributors, New Delhi, 1997, p. 3.

women were molested, and temples were destroyed.¹⁰ Guru Nanak was aware of this situation when he was called to fulfil his mission and he described his times in a most telling manner:

Kali-yuga¹¹ is turned knife, ruler's butchers:

Righteousness on wings is flown.

This is the dark night of evil,¹²

The moon of truth is nowhere visible, nor risen.

For light have I searched to distraction-

No path in this darkness is visible.

Humanity in egoism involved, in suffering wails.

This Nanak seeks to know: How may liberation then

Be found.¹³

The state of Punjab was inhabited predominantly by the Hindu *kṣatriyas* and *Vaiśhyās*.¹⁴ *Rajputs*¹⁵ and *Jats* had been migrating from what are now called Rajasthan and Gujarat.¹⁶ These groups were *Hindu kṣatriyas* and *Vaiśhyās* who possessed an independent and defiant character. The Jats especially brought with them the *Panchāyat* tradition, sense of democracy and communal solidarity. They all were disassociated from the traditional Brahmana hierarchy and felt more at home in a simpler 'Bhakti devotionism'.¹⁷ Guru Nānak was born in this background and became like a beacon light that showed the true path

10 Ibid., p. 101-102.

11 Kali- yuga is the the age of evil, according to Indian cosmology.

12 This is the amavas (last night of the dark half of the month) of falsehood.

13 Shri Guru Granth Sahib, English Translation by Gurbachan Singh Talib, Punjabi University, Patiala, vol. 1, 1995, P.145, p. 299.

14 There are four classes in the Hindu social system. Brahmana (priestly class), Kshatriya (Warriors), Vaishya (business class) and Sudra (working class, mainly those doing mean jobs).

15 Rajputs are rulers of Rajputana, now in Rajasthan. They are ksatriya who rose to prominence before and during Gupta dynasty. They claim Aryan origin and pose themselves as defenders of Hinduism. Cf. "Rajput" in The Oxford Dictionary of World Religions, ed. John Bowker, Oxford University Press, 1997, p. 795

16 Rajasthan and Gujarat are two Indian states in the North and West of India respectively.

17 P. B. Courtright, "Syncretism and the Formation of the Sikh Tradition" in The Sikh Tradition a Continuing Reality, ed. Sardar Singh Bhattia and Anand Spencer, Punjabi University, Patiala, 1999, p. 28.

for good moral life. To be moral, one needs first to be spiritual. Therefore the focus of Guru Nānak, who was in contact with the *sadhus*¹⁸, was on the spiritual side of life. His mother Tripta, who had always seen a purpose in whatever her son did and never raised a doubt or questioned his way of conducting himself, one day spoke to him:

Son, I have seen some mendicants, perhaps on their way to far-off places of pilgrimage. I thought my own Nānak might not take the same route some day. Like them he might not go away to visit the hallowed spots. Son, my heart is restless. I say they left their mothers behind and likewise Nānak will go, too, leaving his mother to her loneliness.¹⁹

In fact, she was afraid that Nānak might go away like other mendicants. As an answer, Nānak uttered a hymn in which he said that he did not need to make any such journeys. He had turned his own heart into a temple and that was the object of his pilgrimage.²⁰ The contemplative silence, the loneliness and the long absence from home to keep company with saints and holy men grew more progressively. As in desperation Bāba Kālu²¹ one day spoke thus, by way of admonition to the son, with reference to his indifference to worldly interest:

My child, why do you not listen to our advice? It is best you take to some occupation. The son of a *Khatiri* must trade, and for trade money is needed. Look, our crops are ripening now; go you and attend to them. Men will then praise you. My son, as the saying goes, where the master is careless, the harvest is ruined.²²

18 Sadhu is a "is a holy man. Used often to designate the Guru." Sri Guru Granth Sahib, vol. 1, p. 738. This word is coming from Sanskrit meaning 'accomplish'. It denotes a man who has controlled his senses, a Hindu holy person who has renounced the world, and seeks Brahman. This word is also equivalent to sant or saint. Cf. "Sadhu" in The Oxford Dictionary of World Religions, ed. John Bowker, p. 835.

19 Kirpal Singh, ed., Meharban Janamsakhi, Khalsa College, Amritsar, 1963, p. 61, as quoted in Harbans Singh, "Guru Nanak as Historical Memory and Continuing Reality" in Perspectives on Guru Nanak, ed. Harbans Singh, Punjabi University, Patiala, 1975, p. 57.

20 Harbans Singh, "Guru Nanak as Historical Memory and Continuing Reality in Sikh Tradition, " in The Sikh Tradition, p. 57.

21 In the Sikh tradition, the Guru's father is mentioned as 'Baba' (grand-father) Kalu.

22 G. S. Talib, Guru Nanak, His personality and Vision, Gur Das Kapur & Sons, Jullundhar, p. 7-8.

Nānak, on listening to this exhortation from his anxious father replied, "Father, I have raised a new kind of crop. I have ploughed the land, harrowed it, sown the seed and made a hedge round it. I watch it day and night. I never grow careless about it. I do not know about any other crop." His father surprised to hear this, cried out, "Look at what this boy says! Where is your new crop? Stop talking like a fool. Show me where it is standing!" At this point Nanak spoke to his father as if he was teaching him a new religious reality. He said that his crop was well ploughed; the growth was very good. It was fine to see. Then he explained that in his farm the mind was the ploughman. The action was the labourers, striving for the good was its water, and it was sown in the field of life. God's Name was the seed and contentment the harrow. It grew best where the farmer had humility in him. Love made it grow fast. Only the most fortunate were blessed with such a crop. Then he added that such a man should not be attached to the world. Such wisdom was granted to a few. Later he said that his crop alone was his support. He, who had this, would never default in payment to the Lord. His children would not starve. Guru Nanak continued to say that He had the faith in the Lord whose land he was farming and that the Lord would look after him very well. In His love he was very happy. He fulfilled all his needs. He concluded saying that after having taken service under that Master he had never been turned away from the market place. The father of Guru Nanak, astonished at this and convinced that his son had lost his mind, advised sternly, "Give up such silliness, and do as everyone in the world does. What is a man worth if he has no wherewithal?"²³

After sometime he received a divine call, and set out on his mission. He made elaborate travels. "For fifteen years he acted as guide to his regular disciples at Kartarpur²⁴ (Dera Baba Nanak) and preached to those who visited the place."²⁵ The religious persecution by the foreign Muslim rulers on the Hindu inhabitants was like insult added to injury. Moreover, aggravated by vast distances and differences of language and domicile, disintegration was further accelerated by the absence of any cohesive force that might unite the scattered clans, castes and sub-castes with a

23 Ibid., p. 6-9.

24 J. S. Grewal, *Sikh ideology, Polity, and Social Order*, Manohar, New Delhi, 1996, p. 26. (It is here that he gave his Guruship to his disciple, Lehna in 1539. G. S. Mansukhani, *Introduction to Sikhism*, Hemkunt Press, New Delhi, 1995, p. 88.)

25 G. S. Talib, *Guru Nanak, His personality and Vision*, ... p. 9-103.

sense of common purpose.²⁶ This situation of fluid, unsatisfactory, and pitiful religious environment made Guru Nanak urge the people to forsake the uncreative path of darkness and assiduously follow the positive and sure way of One God. He attacked the then existing false and pernicious systems, pseudo-philosophies and fake spiritual practices that were current.²⁷

The life Guru Nanak led and proposed was that of a household man, engaged in beneficent activity, keeping the mind absorbed in contemplation and devotion. This synthesis between the spiritual and the secular is meant to eject the monastic or ascetic kind of life that was barren, and cut off from the stream of humanity, which he considered as escapism from the responsibilities towards the world. The vision of Guru Nanak was that the spiritual experience must be at the service of the world. Others should be able to benefit from it.²⁸ In his own life as a herdsman, as a farmer, and as a storekeeper Guru Nanak showed the same attitude. "Those who toil to earn their living and then share their earning with others, have found the true way."²⁹ Within this framework of Sikh understanding of everything, it is taught to accept and adopt a practically monogamous and permanent marriage based family as the strong foundation of all social organization. It is also emphasized that everyone must endeavour to employ this monogamous family based on mutual love and purity of marital faithfulness.³⁰

With everything that is said so far as the backdrop, it may be quite a hard task to pick up what Guru Nanak said directly on the topic of sexuality. But we can have many indications from the available teachings given at various contexts what he thinks about the issues in sexuality.

In India, less than a thousand years ago, magnificent temples like one at Khajuraho (10th&11th C.) of which the exterior embellishments depict and portray sex unions between men and women, in infinitely varied postures, of skillfully chiseled stone entablatures that show only

26 G. S. Talib, *Guru Nanak, His personality*, p. 21.

27 *Ibid.*, 22-23.

28 G. S. Talib, *An Introduction to Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, Punjabi University, Patiala, 1991, p. 84.

29 A. Chakravarthy, "Guru Nanak and His Message- Sainly relevance and challenge" in *Perspectives on Guru Nanak*, ed. Harbans Singh, Punjabi University, Patiala, 1975, p. 429.

30 Madanjit Kaur and Piar Singh, *Some Insights into Sikhism*, Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar, 2000, p. 76.

the highly matured artistic sensitivity of the sculptor but also display a masterly knowledge of Hindu Erotica.³¹ Sikhism grew in a predominantly Hindu Culture where the Vedas, aiming at kindling the sex passions of male and female, *purshagni* and *yoshagni*, as highly desirable and legitimate human pursuits. Through acceptance and implementation of these two precepts man will restore and regulate sex to its proper place in his psyche and life, he will avoid the dangerous pitfalls of pathological and degenerative sex and he will be enabled to evolve so as to realize his highest potentialities and thus to build up and sustain a sane, civilized, and spiritually evolving society which is the 'ultimate purpose of Creation'.³²

Manu, the greatest custodian of the Vedic tradition, considers sex as one of the two pre-eminent elements in the dynamism of the psyche of man, the other being 'hunger' and declares that the basic occupational lifestyle of man alternates between 'sex' and 'hunger'.³³ Generally, the sex is assigned a triple function in human life: (1) sex as an intrinsic pleasure and a remedy to psychological discomforts, disharmonies and complexes, (2) sex as tool of procreation and subservient to continuity of life, (3) sex in relation to man's spiritual evolution and progress towards perfection.³⁴ Hinduism also considered, "sexual coitus is the highest watermark of Yoga leading to transmutation into the First Master of Yoga".³⁵ According to Sardar Kapur Singh, in Sikhism notions of pleasure and sexual mysticism, which are suggested in the Tantra texts are rejected.³⁶ Sikhism also rejects another postulate of Tantric sexualism that upholds the technology of exhausting and destroying passions through passions. "No one has ever achieved passional calmness through unbridled indulgence in passions. Can a blazing fire ever be quenched and put off by adding more and more fuel to it? The abiding peace that knoweth no ending, is nearness to and communion with God."³⁷ The Holy Scripture again says, "All unregulated human passions, eventually are generative of sorrow and disease" (AG, 762) and "uncontrolled passions are the gateway to sorrow and disease and the end product of servility to senses is invariably sickness and trouble" (AG, 1287).³⁸

Guru Nanak proposed virtues to give a balanced life. The virtue of self-control will be one such principle that can be applied to sexuality. Sexual relationship outside marriage is never allowed in Sikhism. Rather,

31 Ibid., p. 63-64.

34 Ibid., p. 65-66.

37 Ibid., p. 68.

32 Ibid., p. 64.

35 Ibid., p. 66.

38 Ibid., p. 68

33 Ibid., p. 65.

36 Ibid., p. 66-67

every one was called upon to exercise self-control. One may be an embodiment of all virtues but if one lacks self-control, all other virtues are of no value. Since the quality of life is determined by our actions, any lack of self-control would lead to difficulty in having a morally valid life.³⁹ For this reason Guru Nanak said: "All creatures on their actions are judged..."⁴⁰ The virtue of self-control is regarded as moderation and regulation in everything. It is the domination of the lower faculties by those that are higher. By conquering oneself, one is the master of the whole world. This will exclude all forms of sexual expression outside marriage. Fornication and adultery are still regarded as deviations that go against the concept of regulation. Similarly, homosexuality and bestiality are to be outrightly rejected as unacceptable concepts by an authentic Sikh.⁴¹ Guru Nanak says, "Conquering thus thyself, mayst thou be lord of the world."⁴² On contrast, Guru Nanak rejected the extremist code of self-control prevalent among some ascetics.⁴³ Guru Nanak said, "Exhausted am I with recitations, austerities, self-restraint: Nor by self-imposed restrictions of *hatha* is He obtained. Saith Nanak: By spontaneous devotion is obtained the Life of the universe."⁴⁴ What Guru Nanak is emphasizing here is only moderation in different spheres. It is in this sense that eating less, sleeping less, and talking less is stressed by Guru Nanak and others.⁴⁵ In a query of the Siddhas Guru Nanak, said,

39 E. M. Nesbitt, "Sikhism" in Hutchinson Encyclopaedia of Living Faith, ed. R.C. Zaener, Random Century Group, London, 1991, p. 415.

40 Shri Guru Granth Sahib, vol. 1, P. 7, p. 19.

41 The Sikhs are noticed easily by the five symbols that they wear. They are kesh (hair), Kara (steel bangle,), Kirpan (sword, knife), and kacha (knicker). Together they are known as Five K's. Cf. N. R Hormise, A Christian Perspective of Sikh Religion, Missiological Studies Trinity College, Jalandhar, 1998, p.138-140, 420.

42 Shri Guru Granth Sahib, vol. 1, P. 6, p. 17. Here conquering the world means the complete spiritual fulfilment; transcendence of all desire and human frailty.

43 This code of self-control required the seekers to exercise a kind of violent self-control of the various sense organs. Guru Nanak identifies this technique as Hatha Yoga which is rejected by him. Hatha Yoga is a discipline involving various bodily and mental controls, but central to them all is the regulation of the breath. Cf. Theos Bernard, Hatha Yoga, Rider and Coy Ltd, London, 1968, p. 15.

44 S. G. G. S., vol. 2, P. 436, p. 925. For devotion the word used is Sahaj which means equipoise

45 Avtar Singh, Ethics of the Sikhs, Punjabi University, Patiala, 1991, p. 105-106.

"By reducing sleep and partaking of spare sustenance,
Is realized the Divine Essence."⁴⁶

In order to achieve self-control, Guru Nanak proposes the control of the desire. The source of all desires is the mind, which is called man. For the Sikhs man refers particularly to human caprice. Guru Nanak says that in order to be moral, a Sikh's aim must be to overcome the waywardness and achieve spiritual equilibrium: Conquest of one's inclinations is conquest of the world. Therefore he says,⁴⁷

The desire into thy mind reabsorb; thus by truth shalt thou swim
across the ocean of existence...

Thou by the Master's guidance on Thy Name meditate;

Therewith would the temple of the mind be joy-filled...

This mind is like a monarch, greedy, ever by temptations attracted.

As by the Master's guidance is greed cast off,

To the Lord is the self attuned.

Should man sow seed in alkaline soil, what profit may he get?

Egoist to truth not inclined, into falsehood absorbs himself.

You that are blind, discard greed! In greed lies great suffering.

By transmuting poison of egoism shall the holy Lord

in the self take abode.⁴⁸

The desire makes a person to act in such a way that is not befitting the status of a human being. One forgets oneself and does everything just to possess the desired object or objective. One should not desire the other person as an object of sex. Every one must be seen and respected as one's own brother or sister, and mother or father. Therefore Guru Nanak says:

Evil doers too bow low, as do deer-stalkers: What good bowing
merely the head when the heart to impurity is inclined?

Hypocritical Brahmin priests recite Scriptures and prayer-texts,
and in contentions engage;

Worship stones and like the heron into false absorption pose to go;

Uttering falsehood, they show iron to be ornaments of gold.⁴⁹

46 S. G. G. S., vol. 2, P. 939, p. 1924.

47 E. M. Nesbitt, "Sikhism"..., p. 414.

48 Shri Guru Granth Sahib, vol. 2, P. 419, p. 888.

49 Shri Guru Granth Sahib, vol. 2, P. 470, p. 998.

To achieve the control of the desire, he proposes to control the eyes. It is the eyes that create in man desires that are not godly. Knowing this Guru Nanak says that the defilement of the eyes is to behold lustily another's woman, another's wealth, and beauty. "The eye's *sutak*⁵⁰ coveting others' womenfolk's beauty and other's wealth."⁵¹ Therefore in order to safeguard oneself one must have discipline of the mind. This indicates that all forms of pornography, vulgar advertisements, yellow journalism etc. will be rejected, and moreover engaging oneself in such activity itself is wrong because one has an obligation not to offer anything that can lead the self and others to impurity. It is wrong to fill the mind with the impure desires based on the illusions presented by anything and anybody. Moreover, the unbridled desires leads one to seek pleasure from one's own self which eventually leads to selfishness, which is another vice to be avoided to be truly moral and spiritual. Guru Nanak says:

The mind wandering in ten directions into illusion is fallen;
 The egoist in illusion is lost.
 Ever is his mind seeking fulfillment of desires;
 His mind by thirst and hunger gripped.⁵²

Guru Nanak says, "Food and drink that the Lord to creation has granted, is all pure."⁵³ The only yardstick applied, as Guru Nanak said, is that "that food which adversely affects the body and pollutes the mind is detrimental to happiness" should therefore be avoided.⁵⁴ No food in particular is forbidden, though food and drink of an intoxicating nature, are no doubt, by their very nature to be rejected. Eating and drinking can be symbolized as self-indulgence. Seeking excessive pleasure from anything is wrong. Applied to sexuality, mind should not be allowed to be polluted by anything. One must exercise chastity in one's conjugal life. Sexual life of a man and woman should never become platform of mere entertainment or simple means of consumption of bodily pleasures. According to Guru Nanak the concept of moral life is enshrined in liberation from 'pleasure'. This liberation can be accomplished only

50 Sutak: impurity believed by orthodox Hindu to stick to a home for a number of days after a birth has occurred. Cf. Shri Guru Granth Sahib, vol. 3, p. 1003, n. 1

51 Shri Guru Granth Sahib, vol. 2, P. 472, p. 1003.

52 Shri Guru Granth Sahib, vol. 3, P. 776, p. 1613.

53 Shri Guru Granth Sahib, vol. 2, P. 472, p. 1003.

54 A. S. Sethi and Sutar Singh, "Sikhism and Interfaith Dialogue" in Comparative Religion, p. 114.

through the love of God. Nanak seems to be placing 'desire for pleasure' against 'desire for God'. According to his teaching desire for 'pleasure' and 'God' seem to be contradictory realities and that brings only more suffering. Man has to choose one of the two. Nanak says only by choosing God, one is liberated. Otherwise one suffers more.

To seek pleasure is only to get more suffering...

Whoever the fire of desire through the Word assuages,
Spontaneously is his illusion of duality banished.⁵⁵

Moreover, Guru Nanak reminds his disciples nonetheless that accursed is such a life that is dedicated to eating. "Cursed be life devoted to gobbling food and adding bulk. Saith Nanak: Without *devotion* to the holy Name, *Is man* befriending his real foes."⁵⁶ Though sexuality is ontologically connected to the use of body, Guru Nanak insists that the purpose of the body is to praise the Almighty. Though sexual relation does provide pleasure, one should not deliberately seek it. We are not living only to maintain and draw pleasure from our bodies. A body that does not help one to have a good relationship with the Creator, will become an instrument of falsehood. Therefore Guru Nanak says that he yearns to praise God with all his body and intellect.

With a body dyed like saffron; with tongue eloquently speaking
words bright as jewels,

With breath fragrant as agar;

With face bearing the holy marks of sixty-eight sacred spots,

With intellect splendidly developed-

With such intellect I yearn to laud the holy Name,

Repository of merit.

Friend! Intellect other than this is straying;

A hundred efforts with such would add up heaps of falsehood...

To what end come those without grace, when dust with dust is mingled?⁵⁷

Guru Nanak personifies the body and speaks to it as speaking to a friend. He says that the body is mortal and it is in the grip of greed and falsehood. He advises to keep the company of good actions. The body should not indulge in theft and evils. In death, when the soul departs the body becomes like an abandoned woman. Of everything one can taste, the sweetest is the Name of the Lord.⁵⁸ Guru Nanak speaks of the body,

55 Shri Guru Granth Sahib, vol. 1, P. 222, p. 449.

56 Shri Guru Granth Sahib, vol. 3, P. 790, p. 1644.

57 Shri Guru Granth Sahib, vol. 1, P. 17, p. 40-41.

58 S. S. Kohli, Philosophy of Guru Nanak, p. 45-46.

This frame, beckoning itself immortal seeks pleasure,
 It carries a heavy burden of avarice, greed and falsehood...
 Listen to our teaching:
 My self! Only good done shall last,
 Its doer never again returning to birth...
 In slanders, thinking evil of others,
 False tale-bearing art thou engaged;
 Others' womenfolk dost thou seek to seduce, clandestinely doing
 evil:
 As departs the self, alone shalt thou be left -
 An abandoned woman....
 Five are the robbers alone am I to combat them.⁵⁹

In the teaching of Guru Nanak, the prominent vices connected with the body are: first, cruelty towards others in the act of accumulation of wealth, second, the theft of wealth belonging to others, third sexual hunger. The body is quite careless about the real objective of its birth in this world. It passes the night in sleeping and the day in enjoying, and thus the most precious opportunity in this birth is wasted.⁶⁰ The first virtue connected with the body is *ahimsa* or non-injury to living beings. S. S. Kohli says that the four fires which are to be avoided are violence, attachment and greed and anger. The first place is given to violence, because it is said to flare up due to three things, i.e., wealth, woman and property.⁶¹ The sexual fire is to be avoided. For, sexual power invested in man should be used only out of genuine, authentic love. Sexual energy used without and out of the context of love, it may lead to falsehood and selfishness.

Positively speaking, the virtuous action of the body is 'service'. Instead of keeping an eye on the wealth of others, one should help others by sharing from one's honestly-earned income. "Those that eat the bread of their labour and give away something in charity, Saith Nanak, truly recognise the way."⁶² The foremost activity of the body should be to work hard for the welfare of the family and society, without any desire for remuneration. S. S. Kohli says that charity without any expectation of reward is real charity. Therefore one should be always ready for

59 Shri Guru Granth Sahib, vol. 1, P. 154-55, p. 322-23.

60 Cf. Shri Guru Granth Sahib, vol. 1, P. 156, p. 324-326.

61 Cf. S. S. Kohli, *Philosophy of Guru Nanak*, p. 46-47.

62 Shri Guru Granth Sahib, vol. 4, P. 1245, p. 2509.

services for the good of humanity.⁶³ The sexual power thus must be put to use positively; to create a family through legitimate means, maintain it through love and strengthen it through mutual affection between husband and wife expressed through conjugal relationship. Thus the "sexy" body is put into the service of the family, society and humanity.

This does not mean that Guru Nanak considers body as something bad or ugly. Body deserves care and love and not persecution and suppression of bodily powers. There the concept of Guru Nanak about *Sanyasi* is different from what is understood normally. The concept of celibacy in whatever form goes against the teaching of Guru Nanak. 'Sanyasi' is originally Hindu concept. The *Sanyasi* is one who after having fulfilled all the duties of his family life (*Grahasta*) renounces the world and goes into solitude to meditate and contemplate upon the Almighty to achieve the mystical union. But Guru Nanak has a different concept of *Sanyasi*. The real spirit of the life of a sanyasi is described by Guru Nanak himself. Gurbachan Singh quotes Guru Nanak's following words to say who really a sanyasi is according to Guru Nanak:

The true Sanyasi serves God, and gives up egoism.
 He seeks not the things of this world.(lit. clothing and food)
 And takes whatever comes without hankering after it.
 He neither wags his tongue in loose talk nor speaks from egoism,
 He hoards the wealth of forgiveness,
 And burns away evil passions in the fire of God-contemplation.
 Blessed is everyone- house holder, Sanyasi, or Yogi who loves
 God's holy feet.
 The true Sanyasi is above hope and despair, his mind fixed in
 God alone.
 His mind finds content only in tasting joy in God, and is centred
 in truth.
 The restlessness of his mind stilled,.
 Through Divine grace he acquires God-consciousness
 The unsteadiness of his mind is brought under restraint;
 By the wisdom given by God he searches in the recesses of his
 self,
 And finds therein the wealth of the Name" (Raga Maru, AG p.
 1013).⁶⁴

According to Guru Nanak life in the world does not contradict life in the spirit. What is asked for is a change in one's attitude. Just as one

63 S. S. Kohli, Philosophy of Guru Nanak, p. 49.

64 G. S. Talib, Selections from the Holy Granth, p. 73-74.

can work for oneself or for another, likewise one may work for the Lord of life. "Without Thee, O Lord, all is untrue". Guru Nanak never asks one to give up one's life duties in the world by turning away from it. Again and again in his songs he speaks of only of changing our attitude to the world and not to shun it.⁶⁵ Guru Nanak said that salvation was not to be found in ascetic practices, in abandoning the world in order to pursue a solitary or an itinerant life, particularly if the renunciation was a hypocritical one designed to provide a life of irresponsible ease.⁶⁶

Some sing songs of devotion, yet of illumination are empty;
The starving mulla makes of his house a mosque.
Others, incapable of earning a living, get ears slit like Yogis;
Practise mendicancy, losing their caste respect;
One claiming to be a religious teacher, and going out to beg,
Touch not his feet ever;
Those that the bread of their labour and give away something in
charity,
Saith Nanak, truly recognize the way.⁶⁷

McLeod says, "it is to be noted that family attachments are not upheld as good or permissible. On the contrary, they too are of the nature of worldly attachments and are accordingly to be avoided." But then he adds, "it is however the attachment, not the family itself, which is to be spurned. Those who love the Name do not need to isolate themselves in order to avoid such attachments."⁶⁸

The teachings of Guru Nanak on woman rejects all immoralities perpetrated against women. Any behaviour that does not match with the status of a woman as mother, wife, and daughter is to be rejected. To this end, he tried for the social uplifting of women in India, which gradually spread, to some extent, to other communities as well. A change in the social values cannot be made so easily by secular laws as by the scriptural medium, because common man generally looks for scriptural guidance. The real change, however, is that which takes place with the common people; a change limited to a few intellectuals belonging to the upper stratum is no change. "Sikhism provided the scriptural basis of

65 A. Chakravathy, "Guru Nanak and His Message- Sainly Relevance, p. 430-31.

66 W. H. McLeod, *Guru Nanak and the Sikh Religion*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1988, p. 211.

67 *Shri Guru Granth Sahib*, vol. 4, P.1245, p. 2509.

68 W. H. McLeod, *Guru Nanak and the Sikh Religion*, p. 211-12.

equality which was not to be found in the religious books of other communities."⁶⁹ Thus common man in the Sikh society has a feeling for the equality of status for women. The credit of all this goes to Guru Nanak and the subsequent *gurus*.

The woman receives great veneration in Sikh Society. She is in no way considered inferior to man. She gives birth to kings and divines. S. S. Kohli says that as a mother, she receives respect of the whole society, as a wife she is the better half, and as a daughter she is a trainee for becoming a healthy constituent of the society. Sikhism is against polygamy. 'One man and one woman' is the golden rule.⁷⁰ Elderly women are considered mothers, those of the same age as sisters, and the younger ones as daughters. In this way S. S. Kohli says that the society can be saved from several physical and moral diseases.⁷¹

Babur, founder of the Mughal dynasty in India, invaded the country several times from 1519 till 1526. He finally defeated conclusively the Delhi Sultan, Ibrahim Lodhi, in the fierce and famous battle of Panipat. Guru Nanak was a shocked witness to the excruciating and devilish orgy of bloodshed and cruel carnage and the shameful dishonouring of women folk by Babur's rude and rustic soldiers, which according to Sikh chronicles occurred near Saidpur (later called Eminabad) near Gujranwala in Pakistan. The barbarian mistreatment that women had to unfortunately suffer at the brutal hands of the Mughal soldiers were so unkind that it moved the heart of Nanak. The Indian rulers were shamelessly incompetent and could not rightfully defend their land or people.⁷² Ganda Singh describes the lot of the women as miserable: "The women who wore beautiful tresses... have their locks shorn with scissors and dust is thrown upon their heads ... dishonoured and with ropes bound their necks, they are carried away by the soldiers."⁷³ G.S. Talib quotes Guru Nanak to affirm that everyone regardless of their greatness is born of woman and that only God who does not depend on a woman for his existence.⁷⁴ Guru Nanak said:

69 O. P. Ralhan., *Encyclopaedia of Sikhism: Religion and Culture*, ed. O.P. Ralhan, vol. 2, Anmol Publications, New Delhi, 1997, p. 678.

70 S. S. Kohli, *The Sikh Philosophy*, Singh Bros. Amritsar, 1992, p. 55.

71 S. S. Kohli, *The Sikh Philosophy*, ... p. 55.

72 G. S. Talib, *Selections from the Holy Granth* Vikas Publishing House, Delhi, 1975, p. 95.

73 Ganda Singh, "Guru Nanak's impact on History" in *Perspectives on Guru Nanak*, p. 422 - 23.

Why revile her of whom are born great ones of the earth?

From man is born woman, no human being without woman is born.

Saith Nanak: The holy Eternal alone with woman can dispense.⁷⁵

S. Radhakrishnan says, "in the *Epic* period⁷⁶ women did not suffer from any special disabilities as they practised austerities and wore garments (*vāṅkala*). Dhritavata, Srutavati, Sulabha, remained unmarried and pursued the life of Spirit."⁷⁷ But in the actual practice she was considered as impure and of low status. Many of the remarks are directed towards depriving women of the right to worship or other religious practice. Avtar Singh says that we also find that in the case of woman a certain sanctifying ritual had to be performed without the recitation of sacred texts (unlike men). She was also looked as an instrument of service to the male regardless of the latter's attitude towards her. They were always considered as something less noble.⁷⁸ As a whole, Hinduism and Islam, which were the main religions in India did not give a respectable and rightful place to women. Though the concept of Devi (Goddess- the female divine figure) had some place of respect in the society, but that was not often translated into practice when it came to ordinary women.

The practice of *satti*⁷⁹ was another clear example of injustice done towards women. If the women had to throw themselves onto the funeral pyre of their husbands, why did not men throw themselves on to the pyres of their wives? Questions of this type are not entertained. Against

74 G. S. Talib, Selections from the Holy Granth, Vikas Publishing House, Delhi, 1975, p. 61.

75 Shri Guru Granth Sahib, vol. 2, P. 473, p.1004. In this verse "great ones" are to be understood as "kings".

76 The epic period is the time of a great epic war between Pandavas and Kauravas. The Pandavas represented the good and the Kauravas, the evil. Lord Sri Krishna, the avatar who came establish Dharma (righteousness) sided with the pandavas and the pandavas won the war and recaptured their lost kingdom from the Kauravas.

77 S. Radhakrishnan, Religion and Society, Allen and Unwin, London, 1956. p.146. We also find that "in Satpatha Brahmana when the husband is about to ascend sacrificial altar he addresses his wife thus, 'Come wife, let us ascend to heavens' and the wife says, 'Yes, let us ascend.' "This may show that women shared somewhat equal responsibilities and duties. " Where women are honoured, the gods rejoice; where they are not honoured all religious rites are of no avail" Cf. Avtar Singh, Ethics of the Sikhs, ... p. 171 - 72.

78 Avtar Singh, Ethics of the Sikhs, ... p. 172 - 174.

this background, we see in Sikhism that it sought to discontinue the immoral provision of *satti*. The practical solution came by permitting the re-marriage of widows just as in the case of widowers. Apart from expressing religious and moral disapproval of *satti*, practical measure, such as, the option of widow re-marriage as morally right was also taken to ensure a complete eradication of this moral evil, which is also indicative of the unequal status of women in society.⁸⁰ It encouraged the marriage of the widows so that she is helped to bring up her children, if there are any. Entrance to the temple was very much restricted for women because she was considered as impure. Guru Nanak was against all such discriminations against woman.

The position of woman in the society has not been always the same. While at times she has been accorded a very high status there are also historical and scriptural instances when under some influences she has been relegated to an inferior position. The inherent attraction of the female was considered to be a temptation, something against which the *sanyasi* must be warned and to which he must not be attracted. Woman was called the seducer and it was said that even the wise and the learned should never remain unguarded in the company of women lest they be made a slave of lust and anger. Avtar Singh says that it was even advised not to sit with one's own mother, sister or daughter in a lonely place.⁸¹

Woman was seen as the tempter by the Muslim society as well and therefore the use of *purda* (veil)⁸² was prevalent. In some countries even in this modern age it is practised. It is laid down in Sikhism that women ought not to wear veils. Whatever be the historical reasons for the practice, it was indicative of restriction on the freedom of women and denial of equality.⁸³ Moreover a Muslim could lawfully marry four women and Mansukhani comments that they were regarded sometimes as objects of sexual gratification. This throws light on to why the women

79 *Satti* is a Hindu practice of throwing oneself by the woman in the funeral pyre of her dead husband with the belief that if she does so her husband will attain salvation. But it is strange the term *Satti* which means a chaste woman has, by a curious process, been applied to the practice of burning chaste women along with the dead bodies of their husbands.

80 Avtar Singh, *Ethics of the Sikhs*, ... p. 181 - 82.

81 *Ibid.*, p. 172 - 74.

82 *Purda* is veil used normally by the Muslim women in order to cover their face. Guru Nanak was against this practice.

83 Avtar Singh, *Ethics of the Sikhs*, ... p. 182.

were kept within purda and their education and movements were restricted.⁸⁴

Guru Nanak, was the first person to revolt against the injustice perpetrated against woman in Indian society. Under the powerful influence of his teachings Indian women, to some extent at least, threw off the shackles of slavery. He declared that she must be rightfully respected since she is the source of man's physical existence. Man is attached to the world through her. Says Guru Nanak:

From woman is man born, inside her is he conceived;
To woman is man engaged, and woman he marries.
With woman is man's companionship.
From woman originate new generations.
Should woman die, is another sought;
By woman's help is man kept in restraint.
Why revile her of whom are born great ones of the earth?
From man is born woman, no human being without woman is born.
Saith Nanak: The holy Eternal alone with woman can dispense.⁸⁵

This *shlōk* (stanza) is held to summarise completely the attitude of all Sikhs regarding the place that women occupy, and it would seem to uphold complete equality for women with men. This is true not only for the Sikhs but also for all people. Nanak's words carry us well beyond the conventional view of his time or, for that matter, the present time as well. Without a woman, man is as nothing, so Guru Nanak asks why should she be called weak and why should she ever be regarded as unclean?⁸⁶ Dorothy Field, speaking on the contribution of Sikhism, the religion of the Gurus, says: "The most notable social improvement was the emancipation of women. Many women found salvation through the Guru's teachings."⁸⁷

Sikhism considers sex as something beautiful and not dirty or ugly. Since truth consists in developing a correct attitude towards God and neighbour, it would be totally incorrect for someone to consider his neighbour as impure just because that person belongs to a particular sex. Nanak, who was the strongest advocate for the cause of women,

84 G. S. Mansukhani, Introduction to Sikhism, Hemkunt Press, New Delhi, 1995, p. 22.

85 Shri Guru Granth Sahib, vol. 1, P. 2, p. 1004.

86 H. McLeod, Sikhism, ... p. 241- 42.

87 D. Field, The Religion of the Sikhs, Murray, London, 1914, p. 15

would attach no ritual impurity to them because of their sex, nor would he hold them in compulsory subjection to men. He gave them the fullest responsibility in all matters, spiritual and social, and regarded them in every way to be equal to men in the sight of God.⁸⁸ He maintained that equality in the sight of men as well.

From these teachings were subsequently evolved the freedom of education and freedom of worship. She could study the scriptures; she could work along side men in the fields and fight shoulder to shoulder with them in the battle fields without any kind of veil on her face, which had become a hard custom in India. She enjoyed an equal status with man in Sikh temples. She was no more considered inferior to man or something impure. While entrance to temples was restricted for women, in Sikh temples she could move without any restriction. She had equal rights of worship and baptism. She can participate in all religious ceremonies.⁸⁹

Under the influence of the teachings of Guru Nanak, the Sikh effort has been to allow women a free and uninhibited participation in the spiritual as well as ordinary life. Even their ignorance was allowed to express boldly. When Nanak puts Angad, (his would-be successor) a guest, to work in his field, his wife rebukes him for such unbecoming behaviour towards a guest. It is highly significant and meaningful that Nanak did not use any harsh words even though the charge was born of utter ignorance. As we teach children patiently, Guru Nanak, without hurting or humiliating, told his wife that what she considered mud was the saffron of God. Thus through his own personal life, he taught that even if a woman makes a mistake or thinks differently, we must be patient and not condemn the whole women race as stupid. Avtar Singh says:

In Sikhism, however, more widespread and practical steps are advised to be taken for the socio-religious equality of woman. In this connection we find frequent and large number of imperatives against some unethical practices involving women. In the various moral codes of the Sikhs a large number of injunctions deal with the rejection of the following unethical practices: (1) female infanticide;⁹⁰ (2) immolation of the widow with the deceased husband, and (3) wearing of veils by women.⁹¹

88 Ganda Singh, "Guru Nanak's impact on History", in *Perspectives on Guru Nanak*, ed. Harbans Singh, Punjabi University, Patiala, 1975, p. 419.

89 O. P. Ralhan., *Encyclopaedia of Sikhism*, p. 677.

90 The practice of female infanticide is an unethical practice that is said to have

Similarly, the Gurus condemned all sexual relations outside marriage and regarded prostitution a shameless sin.⁹² The Gurus were of the view that the widows could re-marry if they themselves so desired but they should not be forced to do so. The widow should have a right to exercise her option for remarriage whenever she wanted it. Thus the remarriage of widows was given moral sanctity.⁹³ Thus we see how from Guru Nanak who began the effort to raise the status of women, to Sikh morality that put down some guidelines for the treatment of women in Sikhism.

Sardar Kapur Singh puts a few ideas together with regard to the sexual energy that is invested in every man and how to deal with it. 1. Nature has endowed man with excessively surplus reservoir of libidinous energy, enormously disproportionate to minimal requirements for purposes of procreation and maintenance of its proper levels. 2. Normally, a blockage or coercive control of this energy results in distortion and disfigurement of psychological harmony and easement of man. 3. But blasting off its embankments and dismantling of all reasonable barriers and censorious controls built to regulate its free flow, in the form of instinctual imperatives and abundant precaution, is even worse, as are the current diagnosis and cures conceived by some pseudo-sciences or plausible voodooes in the West, in particular, and accepted and approved by the modern man in general. 4. Sex-energy is central to human psyche and all other energies, intellect, with feelings and emotional afflorescence feed on the surplus of sex-energy and there is no other energy, endowed to man by nature, that can replace sex-energy. 5. Sex desires and sex sensations, in themselves, are neither a necessary or basic ingredient in the purest and highest level of human consciousness, nor do they provide an unerring cue to such a level of human consciousness. 6. Deviation from truth (Adi Granth, 1188) and non-authentic living (Adi Granth, 25) are the most dangerous pitfalls to be avoided by a man of religion.

been carried on in the past in many ways for many reasons. In Rome, Greece, Arabia, India and China women of the upper classes, relieved by the males of the harder tasks both as an effort to keep them young and as a sign of rank, became an economic burden and consequently infanticide fell mainly on the females. The necessity of finding a dowry for daughters contributed to a selection of female children for infanticide in China and India.

91 Avtar Singh, *Ethics of the Sikhs*, p. 175.

92 L. Lahori, *The Concept of Man in Sikhism*, p. 85.

93 J. Surinder Singh, *The Sikh Religion*, p. 124.

7. 'Normal sex-life, 'natural' sex-life, 'proper' sex-life, or whatever the normative adjective applicable here might be, is neither, is exaggerated development of sex energy through pathological, mental and physical preoccupation and indulgence, which is degenerative and 'the straight road to hell'. (Adi Granth, 1358). 8. Normal and proper sex-life is a regulated and duly controlled life in which sex functions are coordinated to the entire psyche of man, his instinctual, emotional and intellectual functions, so that he lives and develops as nature has intended that he should, and God has designed that he ought to. Sex, therefore, is completely justified in the inwardness of man. Any contradiction arises only when such a harmony and coordination is not achieved. "Such is the marked distinction of Sikhism that it points out a high road to man for the achievement of *summum bonum* through a harmonious well-disciplined worldly life in which the emotions, desire and hopes of man are in mutual coordination and harmony. (Adi Granth, 661).⁹⁴

In conclusion, great emphasis on the purity of character had been laid right from the time of Guru Nanak. Guru Gobind Singh declared the sexual promiscuity as a breach of the Khalsa Discipline even to the extent, during the time of war, anticipating the anger, excitement and revengeful attitude, he forbade the Sikhs molesting the Muslim womenfolk as a retaliatory measure. The point is that the purity of sexual character was to be maintained under all circumstances. Sexual satisfaction is to be sought only in the sincerity and devotion for each other in the context marriage only.⁹⁵ Pre-marital sex experience, teen age sex involvement, group sex, wife-swapping, promiscuity, homosexuality, oral sex, and public propagation of all kinds of sexual behaviour and deviations, through cinema and television, through journalism and fictional literature, are against the Sikh morality event thought may be a tolerated part in other parts of the world,⁹⁶ and a true Sikh should keep himself away from it.

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- 94 Madanjit Kaur and Piar Singh, Some Insights into Sikhism, Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar, 2000, p. 73-75.
 95 Dalip Singh, Universal Sikhism, Bahri Publications Private Limited, Chandigarh, 1979, p. 70
 96 Madanjit Kaur and Piar Singh, Some Insights into Sikhism, Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar, 2000, p. 63

Reflections on Celibacy

Thomas Srampickal

This article by Dr. Thomas Srampickal, Rector of St. Thomas Apostolic Seminary, Kottayam-10 and the former Editor of this issue, is an up-to-date and balanced view of Celibacy. It is, says the author, a psycho-spiritual reflection on the topic. In the past celibacy was lived rather safely and privately, but today it is exposed to more challenges. Hence, celibate's commitment has to be made with clearer awareness and sufficient preparation. As a self-gift of the person, it is never fully accomplished, but keeps on growing as the person himself/herself develops. Being warm and humane, one should be able to maintain good affectionate relationship, renouncing genital sex and marital love quite voluntarily, and spending oneself and one's resources for others, growing in this dedication, etc. Such are the challenges of celibate commitment. Proper sublimation and integration is very important in this process and motivation matters very much. Fit motive for this, explains the article, is the desire 'to be like Jesus' based on the appreciative knowledge and love of Jesus, the supreme ideal and model of the priest. The article also briefly discusses the marks of celibate friendship.

Much is written on celibacy, though most of that writing is by Western authors in Western publications. Because of a general inhibition about sexuality and related issues among us, there is a paucity of open writing and discussion on the subject. At the same time, we see today great cultural changes among us propagating light-minded, confusing and even permissive ideas and trends with regard to sexuality, relationship, friendship, etc., which affect the attitude and behaviour of aspiring celibates too. In the past we related celibacy to faith and dedication and were advised to pray over problems, if there were any; but today we are requested to be well aware of its psychological implications and problems, deal with them and integrate them. Still, except for talking about it in the privacy of personal conferences or small groups in the houses of formation, celibacy remains on the whole a curiosity-subject

confined to hush-hush conversation or a topic of gossip after some mishap. Unlike in the past when celibacy was lived rather safely in one's privacy and exposed to fewer challenges, today it is more exposed and challenged and gradually losing the socio-cultural protection it once enjoyed. Hence it should become a topic of common concern, serious study and discussion. Inhibition and repression always lead to unhealthy consequences.

Celibacy can be discussed from several perspectives like Biblical, historical, canonical, theological, etc., all of which are quite relevant and important. However, abstaining from historico-canonical and very theoretical dimensions, in this paper we should like to dwell on its simpler and more practical aspects, particularly certain psycho-spiritual aspects. Here again, rather than offering new and original ideas we should like to reflect on some rather well-known principles which need to be highlighted and accentuated in the changing context.

I. The Related Factors

Two factors closely related to celibacy, which deserve consideration from the psycho-spiritual perspective, are sexuality and (personality) integration. Sexuality is an essential dimension of the human person. How one looks at, deals with and fulfills sexuality in its different aspects is significant for his personality, including his happiness and effectiveness in life. Celibacy implies a particular view of, approach to and mode of fulfilling sexuality, different from the way the vast majority of people do, with its specific demands and impact on the integration of personality. In other words, sexuality is the context of celibacy and integration is a necessary task associated with it. Hence, we propose to reflect briefly, also drawing upon the findings and shared-experiences of others, on these three realities - sexuality, celibacy and integration - focusing on their interrelationship.

I. 1. Sexuality

Sexuality is not just a superficial feature, passing curiosity, powerful urge, strong attraction or an occasional act. It is a basic mode of being human and operating as man or woman. It has a three-fold dimension - generic, affective and genital - each with a specific focus or thrust but closely interrelated: complementarity, intimacy and generativity, respectively.

1.1.1. Generic sexuality and complementarity

Humans exist as man and woman. As a constituent of the mode of being human, sexuality involves mutually complementary characteristics. These affect the whole being of man/woman and colour all his/her actions and reactions. Though sex at first sight seems to differentiate

man and woman, it strongly complements each other and deeply welds them together. Besides the rather obvious complementary features at the bodily level, man and woman are known to bear complementarity at the psycho-social and spiritual levels. Man's physical strength, logical mind, functional nature, left-brain dominance, rational spirituality, etc., are complemented by woman's endurance, intuitiveness, relational nature, right-brain dominance, affective spirituality, etc.

As completion came to all that God had created so far on the 6th day with the making of Adam, Adam himself was completed by the creation of Eve.¹ That God created Eve as a helpmate of Adam (Gen 2/18) expresses, regarding the sexes, a different divine intention from that of procreation, expressed in Gen 1/28. Man and woman bring to each other a distinctive blend of the elements of humanity and what is more noble and profound in man is challenged and aroused by woman and vice-versa². Therefore interaction and relationship between sexes is a normal requirement for full and healthy personality development of any person, including the celibate.

The complementarity of the sexes is something given. It depends on individuals and groups to make use of the available opportunities and facilities for one's own and others' healthy growth. It is not difficult to see among celibates and people in general those who shy away from heterosexual relations, those who are very eager about and overacting in such situations and those who relate in a healthy and balanced manner. These differences might be due to the temperamental differences and earlier experiences of the persons. The celibate as one dedicated to the love and care of all naturally should be capable of healthy and comfortable relationship with all, including members of the opposite sex. It is important that aspirants to celibacy get sufficient opportunities and occasions for transparent, healthy heterosexual exchanges, interactions and relationships.

Traditionally human beings have been categorized, gender-wise, into masculine and feminine. But some researchers have recently proposed a four-dimensional understanding as follows: high masculine and low masculine, high feminine and low feminine. Their combinations can give rise to 4 types: high masculine-low feminine (masculine), high feminine-low masculine (feminine), high masculine-high feminine (androgynous) and low masculine-low feminine (undifferentiated). It has been found that psychologically androgynous people are more flexible (not rigidly masculine or feminine or tied up to the conventional roles),

1. Paul Conner, *Celibate Love*, 1979, p. 11

2. Cfr. Felix Podimattom, *Sexuality Today*, 1991, p.47

emotionally expressive and resourceful. More specifically, androgynous women had more self-esteem, ability to resist pressure and managerial skills. Androgynous men showed more listening skills, nurturance and empathy. It was also found that women religious were more androgynous than women in general and priests showed more feminine qualities, as noted above, than men in general. The researchers are not sure whether androgynous women/men were attracted to religious/priestly life or they became so by training. At any rate, it is noteworthy that good blending of masculine and feminine qualities makes one more flexible, adaptable, resourceful as well as expressive and that these qualities are subject to nurturing by interaction and experience than being simply gifted by nature³.

1.1.2. Affective sexuality and intimacy

Another key dimension of sexuality is the affective. It refers the tendency, urge and quest for close relationship, affection and companionship with another/others, including feelings, emotions and moods leading to intimacy. Intimacy is much deeper, closer and warmer than complementarity. Intimacy is the human experience of being mutually transparent to one another in such a way that the personalities are fused or permeate each other without being obliterated or lost in the other⁴. According to Erikson, intimacy is 'fundamental sharing of one's innermost being with another' and it is a major task of young adulthood.

In intimacy, the other is known, loved and affirmed in his/her personal uniqueness. There is getting into and feeling the depth of another. The portion of the ego that has been perhaps closed, not sought-after, ignored, hidden or rejected is also open, shared, accepted and appreciated. This affirmation of the self in its depth and uniqueness, with its assets and liabilities, is definitely enriching, elevating and deeply satisfying. This usually happens mutually, resulting in deep personal bond, enhancing mutual trust and joy. It also serves to boost self-confidence and self-esteem, augmenting ego-strength and resilience. Hence, intimacy, involving close personal knowledge, affection, love and care is a source of great strength, support, personal efficiency and growth.

Intimacy is a universal need and everyone desires it. In fact, intimacy is one of the two kernel elements constituting love-relationship (the other being benevolence) and so it should not be surprising that intimacy is a universal need. As a universal need, intimacy can be with any compatible person. It may be genital as in intimate marital relationship or non-genital as in strong and healthy homo-social friendship. Hetero-

3. Sheila Murphy, *A Delicate Dance*, 1992, pp. 77-78

4. Keith Clarke, *An Experience of Celibacy*, 1982, p.23

sexual intimacy however always has its special complementary features and attractive force, particularly during youth and adulthood. It also follows that normally intimacy should not be equated with romance, which is erotically tinged and sentimental affection, or with lust, which is clearly coveting another for the sake of genital satisfaction or 'adultery of the heart'. Needless to add that unless one is vigilant, careful and well-disciplined, human intimacy, especially hetero-sexual, can easily slide into erotic intimacy.

Though every one needs and longs for intimate relationship with another, the capacity for establishing and growing in intimacy is variant among people, depending on their emotional maturity, inner freedom, self-esteem, sense of identity, etc., all of which must have its own background. The celibate is not free from the need of intimacy or its vagaries; he may feel it strongly in early and middle adulthood, sometimes causing uncertainties and conflicts about his chosen life-style. He need not then become afraid of intimacy or shun it. He may also prudently try to grow in intimacy. But the important part of this prudential course of action is to correctly discern his strengths and weaknesses in this regard, especially his emotional maturity, and guide himself in fidelity to his celibate commitment. Prudence may sometimes require him to terminate the very relationship. All this needs good self-awareness, honesty, courage and above all the grace of God.

1.1.3. Genital sexuality and generativity

A predominant dimension of sexuality is of course generativity. It refers to the reproductive potential of the human person, involving the concerned faculties, organs, dispositions, instincts and their exercises and activities. Genital behaviour means not only external actions, but also internal ones like thinking, fantasy, emotions, etc., of a genital nature. A gaze, conversation, touch, etc., between two persons can be of a genital character; but they could also be just complementary actions or expressions of ordinary human intimacy. They could also be all the three. It depends on the dimension(s) engaged by the actions or the object of the actions. Since genital sex is of direct concern for celibacy, we shall discuss it further in association with celibacy.

I. 2. Celibacy

Though the Christian tradition has a common understanding of celibacy, there are different definitions of it. Second Vatican Council's decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests defines it, in continuation with the tradition, as 'perfect and perpetual continence for the sake of the Kingdom of God' (PO 16). D.Goergen who has written very insightfully about clerical celibacy in recent times defines it as "the

religious practice of non-marriage or the choice of a commitment to the single life for specifically religious reasons"⁵. F.Podimattom who has several books on sexuality and celibacy to his credit defines consecrated celibacy as "a state of greater affectionate love for God and human being"⁶. This author would like to describe celibacy as a way of life involving renunciation of marriage and genital sex, chosen out of the desire to be like Jesus, for service to God's people and His Kingdom. Despite the possibility of nuanced interpretations, the definitions reflect a unity of understanding about the nature of celibacy.

Celibacy is not a negation or denial, it is primarily an option, affirmation and self-gift, which involves a renunciation. It does not demand the renunciation of the generic and affective dimensions of sexuality, both of which, as described earlier, can contribute considerably to the growth, well-being, effectiveness and happiness of a person, including the celibate. What is renounced is the exercise of genital sexuality and marital partnership with all that it implies. Any intention or action preparatory or leading to genital sexuality or conjugal intimacy is excluded by celibacy.

Here it should be remembered that genital sexuality involves a powerful urge for satisfaction; it has also strong emotional and psychological appeal because the prospect of total man-woman relationship and union has its attractions, joys and blessings like life-partner, genital intimacy and pleasure, mutual support, children, family, etc. Celibacy implies a free and voluntary foregoing and surrender of all these. 'If celibates consider themselves as superior, made of 'different stuff' than others, one day they will realize that they are made of the 'same stuff' as others. Then the surprise may lead them to repression of their humanity or its denial or feel that they were never meant for celibate life⁷.

Therefore, unless the surrender is 'well made and accepted' by the person himself, it will be consequential for him. Though the specific nature and intensity of consequences may vary from person to person, they can be, as generally known, tensions and frustrations, feeling of emotional deprivation and loneliness, sense of loss, feeling of unfulfilled generativity/ fatherhood, etc. The problems may very well be at the subconscious level, which makes their recognition and handling more difficult. They affect the celibate in various adverse ways, especially his happiness in life and effectiveness in ministry and even perseverance in the chosen state. A responsible person shall try to reduce these risks to the minimum by embracing celibacy in a positive and constructive

5. Joseph Komonchak and others (eds), *The New Dictionary of Theology*, p.174

6. Felix Podimattom, *Virginity Today*, 1976, p.26. 7. K.Clarke, *op.cit.*, p.90

manner, which we usually understand in terms of (personality) integration.

I. 3. Integration

Integration refers to the process of ordering the various elements/parts of a whole according to their nature and purpose within the whole so that they harmoniously work together for the good of the whole and thus of the parts themselves. In other words, it is the 'consistency with which diverse individual processes or actions, and in particular the decisions of the human being, prove effective in functional dependence on each other'. Integration at various levels and of different types are required for the harmonious functioning of man who is a complex psycho-physico-spiritual entity. As St. Paul tells us, our body itself is a very good example of integration and harmonious functioning at the physical level, where the eye, hand, leg, etc. do their job for the good of the whole and their own (I Cor. 12,12ff).

In integration the lower elements are usually ordered to the higher ones as well as subsumed into them and elevated by them, as the physical is ordered to the psychological which is oriented to the spiritual in man. These are all primary integrations almost naturally taking place in us. But there are other types of (secondary) integration which are necessitated by human choices, which do not happen naturally but have to be positively attempted and effected, especially if they involve very specific and distinct style of life and functioning, quite different from the usual and ordinary. Celibacy needs such integration; at the same time, it calls for an integration at the deepest level because it affects and goes on affecting the person from the instinctual to the spiritual realm. Consequently, proper integration of celibacy requires corresponding preparation and disposition at all levels.

As mentioned earlier, celibacy involves the renunciation of marital status, genital sex and its blessings with attendant privations. For good integration this condition of privation needs to be positively viewed, ennobled and the spared energy, potential and resources have to be constructively channelled, a process usually known as sublimation. According to Freud, the best solution for the sexual conflict of a celibate, due to non-satisfaction of genital sex, was sublimation, a largely unconscious process and a defense mechanism in Freudian theory. As all are aware, what is required for healthy integration is not an unconscious and defensive sublimation, but a conscious and free sublimation or surrender. Consequently, every celibate and particularly aspiring celibate should be keenly aware that great personal alertness and involvement is required to make the choice of celibacy in a responsible and meaningful way.

II. Contributors to healthy integration

Writing about 'stages in a celibate's life' Bonnot says "Celibacy is, for each of us living it, an individual and unique journey, heavily conditioned by personality, identity, background and situation"⁸. We may therefore say that two celibates are not living the same celibacy, but two different ones; still, we all have common ideas and ideals about celibacy as a shared experience. Hence, without making any claim for comprehensiveness or exclusive authorship, we should like to propose or better restate certain basic requirements for integration.

II.1. Enlightened awareness and free surrender

A celibate as well as an aspiring celibate should be well aware of the nature of celibate commitment as a self-gift and its implications for genital sex, particularly the renunciation of marital life and its advantages. Though all this was almost taken for granted rather safely in the past, today it needs sufficient clarification on account of lack of knowledge as well as the existence of confusing ideologies about relationship, friendship, etc. Further, the positives and negatives of celibate commitment need to be accepted quite freely and with pleasure, without any pressure, regret or sense of loss, at least at the conscious level.

While giving due emphasis to genital sex and marital life, it is also necessary not to exaggerate its goods and benefits, which is quite liable to happen in a sex-filled and hedonistic culture. Besides, disgruntled celibates tend to romanticize marriage just as frustrated married people tend to idealize celibacy. Both are unrealistic. As Murphy notes, two unhealthy extremes are possible here: "viewing celibate chastity as some distant, almost unattainable ideal towards which we strive but which we never reach, or viewing religious profession or ordination as signalling a finished product, developmentally speaking. Celibate chastity is not only an ideal. It is a call to live concretely in a certain way. The challenge of celibate life requires that we take seriously both our humanness and the commitment to integrity"⁹.

II. 2. Strong and sublime motivation

Nobody can hope to meaningfully embrace celibacy without strong and sublime motivation, which is supposed to provide the ongoing psychological strength for making and living the commitment. Both happy sublimation and effective integration requires adequate motivation which is also probably the great challenge of the celibate. The motive should be personalized, constructive and Christo-centric.

8 Bernard Bonnot, "Stages in a Celibate's Life" in *Asian Quest*, May-August 1996, p.3.

9. Sheila Murphy, *op. cit.*, p.8

It must be first of all satisfying and convincing to the person concerned; by virtue of it he must be able to justify his celibate commitment above all to himself. Nobody can live celibacy on borrowed convictions. His motivation should inspire him to spend himself and his resources positively and constructively, working for the Kingdom of God, usually in meaningful dedication and service to others. Celibacy is not to be sought as a means for anything else: material comforts, social status, free solitary life, escape from family obligations, etc. As it is said 'he who is psychologically unfit for marriage is also unfit for celibacy'.

The inner strength of celibate commitment has to be Christo-centric. That is, the motivation should be based on and inspired by one's knowledge, appreciation and love for Jesus Christ. This love forces one 'to be like Jesus' and to share in the life-style of Jesus and dedicate himself to His Kingdom. Such a one chooses celibacy because of his "existential impossibility of doing otherwise". Then celibacy will not be 'unmarriedness but unmarriageability'; but truly eunuch for the Kingdom of God (Mt 19,12). When one is prepared to make the commitment under this conviction, questions like 'what is the canonical provision?' 'what was/is a particular tradition?', etc., carry little weight, except academic interest. "Implanted in priestly life, even though not absolutely necessary either for the priesthood or for the exercise of priesthood, celibacy is most fitting because it sheds luster on the nature of the priesthood and enhances the work of the priesthood itself...Priestly celibacy is a communion in the celibacy of Christ...the immediate model and supreme ideal" of the priest, an ideal which is capable of inspiring heroism in those who feel called and motivating them to reproduce in themselves the same conditions and outlook in life as Christ had in order to effect closest possible imitation of Him¹⁰.

We know that sexuality is basically the power of love and genital sex is a powerful urge and attractive force. A strong personal love which is destined to become fruitful is required to sublimate and integrate it. This love is the love of Jesus, which can bear manifold fruits through selfless love and care for God's people and service to His kingdom. Love for no other cause or institution can be so inspiring and motivating as the love for Jesus. Though nobody can dictate another's motive in this matter we should like to say, that 'to be like Jesus' be the watchword of every celibate and aspiring celibate. Celibacy is never an accomplished reality; it will be always in the process - not always smooth and orderly of growth and ripening as the person himself grows and develops. But,

10. Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith, *A Guide to Formation in Priestly Celibacy*, 1974, no.14

we believe, the nature and perception of the motive matters much. "True integrity requires integration, and integration requires time. Yet the process of becoming celibate cannot take lightly the fact that we are called to live for the sake of the gospel, a gospel that asks of us a total commitment"¹¹.

Today there seems to be a growing tendency to consider celibacy just as a requirement for ordination to priesthood because the church stipulates celibacy for major orders. And after ordination of course the celibate state enhances certain freedom and availability for ministry. This view weakens the radical nature implied in the celibate commitment which is a most fitting expression of the radical nature of priestly commitment and the earnest strive to be like Jesus. The difficulty with celibacy today, we feel, lies more in the troubled priestly motivation than in troubled sexuality. In the past, the catchword defining the priest was 'alter Christus' (another Christ). Though it was subject to certain one-sided interpretation, it instilled into the conscious and subconscious mind of the priest his call and duty to be conformed to Christ, with all that it implied. Social expectations and community support helped the priest in his attempt to live it. We have lost that catchword and not replaced with one having the same depth and challenge.

The usually proposed motives also have come to be interpreted in a watered-down manner. They are (1) witnessing to the life-style of the Kingdom of God, where there is no marriage or husband or wife (Mk 12/25), (2) freedom and availability for service and ministry to the people of God, and (3) witnessing to the values of the Kingdom, like simplicity, asceticism, chastity, etc. The first one is suggested as appropriate for religious life, the second for diocesan clergy and the third for single-state celibates. It is well and good! But there is a tendency to consider each motive rather independently, without due emphasis on anchoring it to the love of, and dedication to, Jesus Christ. In the case of diocesan clergy, for example, the justification of celibacy is freedom and availability for ministry, which robs it of its 'radical and challenging nature' and makes the priest a functionary. Then it prompts the priest to ask himself whether, after all, celibacy is necessary for doing his job, when so many people holding very responsible positions in the secular world do their jobs very well, despite being married. Quite different would be his perception and question if the idea of 'being like Jesus and total surrender' was emphasized.

It is evident and all accept that nurturing strong motivation for celibacy inevitably requires growing in the knowledge and love of Jesus by

11. Sheila Murphy, *op. cit.*, p.8

encountering Him in the gospels, meditating on the word of God, ardent prayer, meeting Jesus in the people, especially the 'poor and the lowly. A person who does not care for his prayer-life need not hope to live celibate life faithfully. Jesus himself says that only he who has received the gift may take up celibacy (Mt 19,11). In order to receive the gift of God, one has to pray for it and be disposed to it.

II. 3. Channelling Resources

Celibacy becomes really meaningful and sublimation attains its target only when the celibate's resources are channelled through dedicated service. His time, energy, knowledge, skills, talents and above all his capacity for love and care are all to be spent for the people. The effectiveness of ministry depends mainly on the strength of one's motivation and resourcefulness, both of which may vary from person to person. One who is highly resourceful and has strong motivation will not fail, with God's grace, to be a very happy and effective priest. Even if one is not very resourceful but has a strong motivation he will keep trying to do his best in the ministry and will also try to improve his resources by observation, learning, etc. We all may know several priests who are not much gifted, but dedicated and doing hard-work. On the contrary, one who is well gifted but poorly motivated is very likely to use his resources as well as the facilities provided by his priestly status for his own gain and advantage. Some may do it so shrewdly that it may not be recognized for what it truly is. All this reminds us of the special significance of strong and proper motivation.

III. Cautions-Concerns

Not finding a better term, we use 'cautions-concerns' for the following observations. Smooth going in celibate life requires an overall orderly life including a reasonable satisfaction of one's needs. An important one among them is the need for love and intimacy. It is said that everyone falls in love with somebody at least once in life. Evidently, unless great prudence and discipline is exercised, "intimacy disasters" can occur.

III.1. One problem in this context is *infatuation*. It is getting emotionally intoxicated with another for a certain period. He/she is not amenable to common sense or reasoning then. A young celibate infatuated with a woman may do foolish, nonsensical things which he may regret or even try to deny later. Infatuation is more likely to happen to rather closed and inhibited people who may not have experienced close relationship earlier. One can also become the object of someone else's infatuation and then be carried off. Nobody needs to boast that he is an exception to all this. Self-knowledge, prudence and humility are assets.

III. 2. *Good friendship* is always is an asset and safeguard for celibate life. Homo-social friendship with equals is highly commendable. If some have cultivated good and mature heterosexual celibate friendship, it is well and good. Above and beyond that, there seems to be a growing view among young celibates today that heterosexual friendship is something like a necessity for a celibate. What is meant here is not the ordinary acquaintance, friendliness and cordial relation with people of both sexes, which is usually part of any priest's life, but intimate or very close heterosexual friendship. "Contemporary celibates come from contemporary society; ours is a personalist age that is rediscovering community on the group level and friendship on the individual". Everywhere the cry is "love is the meaning of life", but the enthusiasm is not accompanied by similar discernment. Conner rightly points to the cultural context which, without being properly discerned, can influence the thinking also of celibates about love, friendship and related matters.

Considering intimate heterosexual friendship to be a necessary thing in the life of a celibate seems to be an exaggerated view. At any rate, only those who are psychologically and spiritually mature may enter into such relationships. At times, the examples of great Saint-Friends are cited. Yes, Francis Assisi and Clara, Francis de Sales and Jane de Chantal, Therese of Avila and John of the Cross, Catherine of Sienna and Raymond de Capua and others are known to have been great Saint-Pairs. But they appear to have been integrally mature to anchor their friendships, including thoughts, desires, affections and actions, in the spiritual centres of their persons and nourish them from there, not from anywhere lower than that. How many ordinary celibates will be able to do so? Besides, it is not possible for anybody to satisfy all his needs nor is it necessary and meaningful. Reasonable and meaningful satisfaction of needs has to be consistent with and guided by one's goals and values.

III. 3. Noting certain usually given marks of *healthy heterosexual friendship* may be useful in this context. *Psycho-spiritual maturity*: The health of a friendship depends on the maturity of the friends. Heterosexual friendship of celibates without sufficient maturity is headed for risk and trouble. Of course, celibacy does not exclude intimacy, but it demands detachment which requires freedom from "emotional addiction" and high emotional dependence on another. It also needs realistic mastery in the exercise and expression of feelings, desires, affections and actions, and the ability to transcend these for the sake of one's values and ideals. Mature people are

also aware that heterosexual affection is a strong force drawing the parties ever closer and hence it is irresponsible and imprudent to play with such emotions. It may be useful to remember that emotional and genital drives tend to increase the tendency to rationalize and find silly excuses for pursuing the drive and satisfying it.

Dedication to vocation and ministry. The friends should be fully earnest and concerned about their own and the companions' primary (priestly/religious) commitment, including celibate commitment. In fact friends should encourage, protect and promote each other in their vocation and ministry. *Open and prudent:* Healthy mature friendships have nothing to hide. Their selfless love and concern for each other, dedication to vocation and ministry, transparency and openness to others, etc., would be positive marks of their friendship. The healthy blend of intimacy and detachment in their relationship might be edifying. Being open to the spiritual father/confessor regarding friendship and seeking his guidance when necessary is also part of being open. For its own good and that of others, heterosexual friendship has to be very sensitive to the demands of prudence by carefully avoiding all that is unfit and unbecoming for celibates regarding time, place, manner, context, etc., of expressing their love and concern. A little inattention to any of these can rock or even kill an otherwise good relationship and, worse still, tarnish for life the reputation of the persons concerned. Giving due respect to social conventions and community expectations, which may not be the same in different places, and thus avoiding scandal is also requirement of prudence. "Prudence is the better part of valour" is a wise saying. *Prayerful:* If prayer is indispensable for faithfully living the celibate commitment, it is all the more necessary for rightly growing in celibate friendship. The mutual prayer and spiritual support of the friends is of course an added help.

Despite the changes and challenges of the times, it is most encouraging that, by the grace of God, there are so very many celibates living out their commitment happily and effectively and so many earnestly aspiring to make the same commitment. The ardent prayers and earnest dedication of all celibates shall also be a source of mutual strength and support in the strive to live out the commitment ever more faithfully!

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